

Jeremiah 48:1-47 The Rise and Fall of Pride Falls Ch. AM 4/30/2023

God hates sin, and God must punish it. That is why sinners must take our sins to the cross where Christ was crucified. The wages of sin must be paid in full.

Becoming a Christian means that you give your sins to Jesus Christ, trusting they were paid for when he died on the cross.

Today we look at a group of people who refused to turn to God despite God's warnings of judgment on their sin. Is there still hope for them? Here is the main point of our study today: **The Lord's surprising grace of restoration is presented against a backdrop of His own lament, even while He judges pride!**

1. The destruction of Moab. (v.1-25)

Verse 1. The next recipient of punishment is Moab!

Moab used to be famous. But today we barely know any of the 25 cities named in this chapter. That is part of the point. They came under God's judgment!

Moab has always had a dark and ominous path, ever since its beginning in incest. In Gen. 19, after the destruction of Sodom/Gomorrah, and death of Lot's wife for looking back, Lot's daughters were alone in the countryside with just their father. You would think that after such judgment, Lot's daughters would fear God, but instead they wanted to have children no matter the wrong method. So, they got their father drunk and each used that moment to fulfill their dream in a dark way. That is the origin of the country of Moab. Later, when Israel was freed from bondage to Egypt, God's people needed to pass through the territory of Moab. The bad King of Moab recruited a false prophet to try to destroy them (see Numbers chapters 21-23). When that strategy failed, the women of Moab seduced the men to worship false gods. (see Numbers chapter 25). The quick actions of a priest saved the day. Later Moab oppressed God's people until the Lord raised up a judge to deliver His people. Conflict with the Moabites persisted throughout Israel's subsequent history. With this long, difficult history in mind, we as readers of Jeremiah chapter 48 can understand the length and intensity of God's judgment against Moab, a chief enemy of His people.

So, our chapter begins ominously "Concerning Moab" with overtones of trouble, judgment and death.

Then, in verse 1, God is presented as "*the LORD of hosts*" which is saying The General of the Armies of heaven. God was in war mode, and was about to speak. The first word God spoke regarding Moab, says it all. *Woe*.

Suddenly, with one word, there is a reversal. Instead of Moab inflicting trouble, judgment and death, Moab is about to receive trouble, judgment and death! The rest of this chapter unfolds this one single word "Woe." "Look out!"

The coming verses show a full knowledge of the terrain of Moab, naming the great centers of economic power and military pride. These verses read like a military intelligence report for God's coming invasion.

God puts these military places next to words of suffering, destruction and death. Listen to these phrases from verses 1-5, laid waste, put to shame, broken down, no more, disaster, cut off, brought to silence, pursued by a sword. The listing of military bases alternating with phrases of loss, pound at us as readers.

What if our news report was Fort Bragg bombed, Fort Bliss rendered useless, Fort Benning hit and cut off from communication, etc. What had seemed permanent and secure is now undermined, and placed in jeopardy. The centers of power are emptied of power, and the centers of pride are emptied of pride. This is poetically, the fall of pride!

In verse 6, this polished Hebrew poem provides the only fitting reaction for the people of Moab. *“Flee! Save Yourselves!”* They should run from pride, and the results of pride. Verse 7 shows they had pride in the form of trusting the wrong things, *“because you trusted in your works and treasures.”* Run in humility, because in verse 7, even your false God, named Chemosh, with all of his priests and officials, shall go into exile. Run in humility, because in verse 8, the enemy destroyer will come upon every city, and there is no escape from death in the city, no escape from death in the valley, and no escape from death in the plain. The only hope is to separate themselves from the pride of their accomplished cities. The cities will be destroyed, so get out of them! Pride will be crushed, so run in humility. Run in humility, like verse 9 says, *“Give wings to Moab for she would fly away; her cities shall become a desolation, with no inhabitant in them.”*

Verse 10, they had the pride of laziness, and therefore curse was coming. In verse 11, Moab had the pride of being at ease. The comparison is to a winemaker and wine producer. Ever since he was young, he enjoyed a pleasant career, content not to remove the dregs from the wine. Not poured from one vessel to another vessel. The picture here is of their pride in the form of complacency. The picture of the winemaker is a picture of Moab, who has been unbothered and untroubled for so long, living smug and over-contented. The taste and smell of the wine is unchallenged, just like the lifestyle and culture of Moab was unchallenged. They like the way it tastes, and so they have fallen into a sleepy complacency.

Look what God will do to wake the wine bottle that is Moab in verse 12, *“Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I shall send to him pourers who will pour him, and empty his vessels and break his jars in pieces.”* Once God shook up Moab, they would no longer be confident in their false god Chemosh, but rather would be ashamed of their former confidence. The Moabite false god would fail them in a crisis.

God would dismantle Moab, and shake it up, and pour her out like pouring out wine, and break the bottle into pieces.

With various poetic word pictures, we are getting a comprehensive picture of God destroying Moab. Poetically, the winemaker's work will be poured out, militarily, Moab will go into exile, and religiously, their god will fail them.

In verse 13, their confidence was in the wrong thing, which is the same word that was used in verse 7, to say that they trusted in the wrong thing.

Moab arrogantly trusted in their own strength, and in the strength of their own god who they thought would sustain them.

Starting in verse 14, God now confronts any groups left in Moab who still thinks of themselves as "heroes" or "mighty men of war," or verse 15, "choicest of mighty men." What about them? God warns in verse 15 that the destroyer would invade, and that the strongest young warriors of Moab would be slaughtered on the battlefield. Who says that? At the end of verse 15, the one speaking is the same LORD of hosts, the same General of the Armies that we saw in verse 1. There is now one an addition to God's list of titles in verse 15, God is also The King, which is a direct challenge to their false god Chemosh. Jeremiah's God is not just the God of the home territory back in Israel, but also is the God over the land in Moab.

In verse 16, God in beautiful poetry warned of coming: calamity, affliction, grieving, brokenness, destruction, fleeing, being put to shame, wailing, and crying.

In verse 17, God taught them to grieve for Moab and to stop saying from verse 14 "*we are mighty men,*" and instead learn to say this, in verse 17, "*how the mighty scepter is broken...*" Stop hanging on to pride in the form of illusions.

In verse 18, *Come down from your glory, and sit on the parched ground...*"

Still having trouble facing reality? Listen to verse 19, "*Stand by the way and watch...Ask him who flees and her who escapes...What has happened?*"

Verse 20. Moab is put to shame. Moab is broken. Wail and cry!

Notice something. Verse 1 began with laid waste, and verse 20 ends with "*laid waste.*" God has time to turn this into beautiful symmetrical poetry!

Next was a courtroom scene of a lawsuit. The indictment was clear in verse 21, "*Judgment has come...*" The cities being indicted are listed in verses 21-24. God's sentence is pronounced in verse 25, "*The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, declares the LORD.*" Why? The reason takes us to the next point.

2. The grief of God over the destruction of Moab. (v.26-46)

Verse 26 tells us the problem with Moab. Moab thought that they could raise themselves up against the LORD. That is curious, because Moab did not think of themselves in terms of the LORD God of Israel at all! God says that everyone in Moab must give account to the LORD God. If they are not for God, they are against God! Moab's biggest failure is their pride in the form of their own misguided thoughts about religion. They had pride in the form of not submitting to the rule of the Creator God. They had pride in the form of not accepting God's definitions. Such as what? God is God of all nations. God has commands and

right/wrong definitions for all nations. God says to all nations, right is right and wrong is wrong. But what did Moab do? Verse 26 tells us that Moab *magnified himself against the LORD!*

How? By mocking God's people. Look at verse 27, '*Was not Israel a derision to you? ...whenever [Moab] spoke of Israel [Moab] wagged [their heads].*' The pride of the people of Moab also came in the form of treating the people of God with hatred and contempt. This is how Moab violated God! Sin against the people of Israel was a sin against the God of Israel, the Creator God!

What should happen to Moab for defying God and for mistreating believers?

Verse 26 the humiliation is described as drunkenness, vomit, and being held in derision. Moab was put in a position of weakness, instability, helplessness. For Moab to be treated with contempt shows God's reversal. Moab will now be treated the way that Moab formerly was treating Israel. The punishment was directly correlated to the offense. Now Moab is being counseled in verse 28 to leave the cities. The coming destruction will be so severe that there is no hope, except to run.

Verses 29-30 stack up words of pride, arrogance and a demand to be allowed to do whatever they want to do. Moab was well-known for their pride. What was the reaction of God? Verse 31, God cried and wept and wailed! Yes, it is confirmed in verse 32, God weeps for them! God was grieving and mourning for Moab, stuck in pride! Verse 33, God saw that gladness and joy had been taken away from Moab because of their pride, and God's reaction was sadness!

Verses 34-35 show the places that should be places of joy and celebration, but had become places of grief, because of the pervasive damage of pride. Pride and arrogance were causing enormous loss, which evoked a profound grief.

All of it relates back to God as central! It is God who defines pride, God who set up the world in such a way that pride always causes a fall, and God who responds with grief and moaning to all such damage that goes against the Creator's heart and the Creator's design. God even grieves over the enemy Moab!

Verses 37, Moab grieves. The grief is seen in shaving of heads, beards, the gashes and the sackcloth. In verse 38, lamentation is on the housetops, because God has broken the vessel no one wants. Verse 39, the mourners declare how broken Moab has become! Moab has been dismantled by God. Sadness!

Verse 40, the threat that God sends to dismantle was shown as an eagle, and the warriors of Moab were afraid, because Moab will be destroyed. The reason is repeated in verse 42, because Moab "*...magnified himself against the LORD.*"

Verses 43-44, God's terror cannot be escaped, those running away fall in a pit, and those make it out of the pit are caught in a snare. It is abundantly clear that it is God who is the One that is bringing these things upon Moab!

Verse 45, those still running will run out of strength, and fire will consume them. Escaping is hopeless.

Verse 46, God comes full circle back to that single word from verse 1 that summarized it all *Woe!* Their false god Chemosh is even named again, and the people are described as captives, and there is nothing that Chemosh can do to stop the LORD in His judgment on the pride of Moab!

3. Surprise! Restoration for Moab! (v.47)

There is a surprise of hope at the end of our chapter!

After all the talk of judgment and destruction, the final note is a message of salvation and restoration!

The captivity of verse 46 is reversed in language of returning in verse 47. They are exact opposites. The point is one that teaches us about our God.

Even for Moab, there are latter days. There is more promised for the future of Moab than just ultimate destruction.

God's primary business with Moab is not destruction, but salvation!

God is sovereign, and the judgment has established that, but now that God is sovereign, God gets to voice His powerful newness to residents of Moab, who are enslaved in pride and arrogance! God is capable of destroying Moab, and God is also capable of giving them a gift of new life through His promise! God is able to send to Moab a destroyer, and God is able to send to Moab a Savior.

What is so surprising is that the language of God to His people is now used on God's enemies! The language is the same as what is used repeatedly of restoration of Judah, in what we call the Book of Comfort, or the Book of Consolation, Jeremiah chapters 29-33.

It is really a message not to Moab but to God's people in exile in Babylon! The same God who can bring people into exile for their sins, is the same God who can bring people out of exile. What an encouragement to God's people over in Babylon's prisons! God designed his speech to Moab to be overheard by His own people. If you will repent, and turn to Me, I will reverse all of this!

If God will weep for Moab, what grief there must be in the heart of God for His own people in exile in Babylon, yet even now pridefully refusing to repent!

We hear the heart of God expressed by Jesus in Matthew 23:37, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!*"

Following this statement, Jesus went to the cross to die for us, and to rise again to bring us out of slavery to the sin of pride! There is hope for us. We have salvation offered from the heart of God, who has been grieving over the damage caused by our arrogance and pride and complacency.

Conclusion:

1. Weep for the lost.

It is sobering to realize that all of the prophecies of judgment in this chapter came to pass. The punishment of God against the Moabites for their pride is a warning to anyone who doubts the destructive power of pride or the reality of the wrath of God. Proverbs 16:18, *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”* Weep for the lost.

2. Remember that the day of judgment is a day of blessing for Christians.

The God of Judgment is also the Lord of grace! God’s grace in the last judgment will apply not just to one nation, one people Israel, but even to those who have been God’s enemies! Romans 5:10, *“...while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. (v.11) More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”*

When quoting the Bible about God’s judgment, often people quote the verse Hebrews 9:27, without quoting the next verse. Listen to Hebrews 9:27 and 28, *“...just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.”* Our God is coming in salvation! We need not fear God’s coming, but rejoice.

3. Hold firm to the true gospel of grace, not the false gospel of self-humbling.

Humble yourself before God, receive His grace. When we repent, we are forgiven. Our sinful pride is already paid for by Christ on the cross. So, we have no business staying in your sinful stance of pride. But we also have no business believing that we have saved ourselves by sufficiently humbling ourselves!

1 Peter 5:5-6, *“...Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you...”*

No only does God offer us restoration through His Son and through His Word and Spirit, but God also brings us the blessing of humbling and restoration through our brothers and sisters in Christ. Consider Galatians 6:1, *“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”* Pride is a trap in which people get caught, and we are called to help them. God offers restoration to the prideful, and calls us to remain open to being approached by a brother or sister to confront us about our own pride! Additionally, God also expects us to remain open to the delicate task of approaching a brother or sister who is prideful, and to gently restore him or her. The whole time that we attempt this, we are commanded to keep a careful eye on ourselves, so that we do not get tempted with pride, and fall into the same snare of pride ourselves again!

Especially be careful to hold firm to the true gospel of grace, not the false gospel of self-humbling.

Martin Luther the Reformer in the early 1500s, before he re-discovered the gospel, apparently believed in a false gospel of self-humbling. He would spend as many as six hours at a time confessing his sins. But still he found no rest for his sinful soul. Luther was discouraged and even despairing until he found the true gospel means that God GIVES us righteousness.

We must always keep it very clear in our minds that no one has enough humility to be acceptable before God. We need Christ's grace of forgiveness! Christ needed to die in order to pay God's just penalty against our pride! We are not saved by our own humbling of ourselves! We are not saved by our repenting. We are not saved by our believing. We are saved by Christ! Christ gives us repentance and faith and humility and Christ gives us His righteousness. Listen to Romans 1:16-17, "*...the gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... for in [the gospel], the righteousness of God is revealed...*" Paul continues to write about our attempts self-righteousness as compared to the righteousness given to us by God for the rest of chapter 1, and 2, and 3, until chapter 3:21-22, which reads, "*the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*"

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