

Jeremiah 18:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

Analysis

God applies the potter principle directly to Judah: "Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The object lesson concludes with explicit application—God is the potter, Judah is the clay. "Behold, I frame evil against you" uses potter language (*yotzer*, יָצַר, forming/shaping), indicating God is actively preparing judgment. Yet the urgent appeal follows: "return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good."

The call to "return" (*shuvu*, שׁׁבּוּ, turn back, repent) is individual and corporate—"every one" must personally repent, yet national transformation requires collective renewal. "Make your ways and your doings good" demands moral reformation, not merely ritual or emotional response. True repentance involves changed behavior demonstrating transformed hearts (Matt 3:8, Acts 26:20).

This verse demonstrates that even imminent judgment remains avoidable through genuine repentance. God's warning isn't sadistic threat-making but compassionate appeal. The Reformed doctrine of effectual calling applies to individuals, but nations also receive genuine offers of mercy that they can and do resist. God's

desire that all repent (2 Pet 3:9) doesn't guarantee all will—human resistance to grace remains mysteriously real despite divine sovereignty.

Historical Context

Jeremiah repeatedly appealed for national repentance (Jer 3:12-14, 4:1-4, 7:3-7, 26:3-6), warning that judgment could still be averted. Unlike prophets who announced unconditional doom (Nahum against Nineveh after their repentance wore off), Jeremiah consistently offered hope for those who would genuinely repent. Tragically, Judah refused, sealing their fate. The call went unheeded, demonstrating that even the most urgent, compassionate divine appeals can be rejected.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What specific 'evil ways' and 'doings' do you need to turn from in genuine repentance?
2. How does understanding that God 'frames evil' against the impenitent affect your urgency in calling others to repent?
3. In what ways does genuine repentance require not just feeling sorry but changing behavior?

Interlinear Text

וְעַתָּה	אָמַר	בְּאֵל	אָשָׁא	יְהוּדָה	וְעַל
H6258	Now therefore go to speak	H4994	H413	to the men	of Judah
	H559			H376	H3063

כ ה אָמָר יְרוּשָׁלָם יְשַׁבֵּן וְאֶת־הַיּוֹם
and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem Now therefore go to speak H3541
H3427 H3389 H559

בְּרִאָת	נָשָׁהָבָה	מִחְשָׁבָה	עֲלֵיכָם	וְחַשְׁבָּה	בְּרִאָת	בְּרִאָת
evil	against you and devise	H5921	a device	against you return		H4994

דָּרְכֵיכֶם יְהִיטָּבָו קְרַבְתָּה אֵישׁ
to the men and make your ways evil good and make your ways

וּמְעַל לִיכֶם:
and your doings
H4611

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 17:13 (Evil): Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

Jeremiah 35:15 (Evil): I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye

shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

Jeremiah 7:3 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

Jeremiah 25:5 (Evil): They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever:

Acts 26:20 (References Jerusalem): But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Zechariah 1:3 (References Lord): Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.

James 5:1 (Parallel theme): Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

Isaiah 5:5 (Parallel theme): And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

Micah 2:3 (Evil): Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil.