

## Warnings of mercy

*It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.*

*Jeremiah 36:3*

This chapter records God's direct command to Jeremiah to produce a book, a scroll, of all the prophecies that the Lord had given to Jeremiah to that point. They are described as "the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations." Jeremiah obediently called Baruch to write the words in the book as he spoke them to him. Jeremiah then instructed Baruch to go and read the words in the temple. As the words of the Lord were heard by a scribe, who then brought Baruch to read the warning to the princes of Judah, the princes were rightly afraid and determined to inform king Jehoiakim. After they instructed Baruch to hide himself and Jeremiah, their encounter with the king did not go well, and, upon hearing the words of the book read, Jehoiakim sliced and burned the roll, though he was not able to apprehend Jeremiah and Baruch.

Thus, Jehoiakim resisted God's purpose for the writing, which is revealed in our text of the Lord's words to Jeremiah. Although the roll contained many warnings against Judah and their kings, as well as against the nations that would come against them, the purpose of the warnings was not to simply condemn, but to call to repentance. We see at the end of this verse that His ultimate purpose is to forgive iniquity and sin. However, forgiveness is predicated upon repentance, because our God is just as well as merciful. Therefore, He lays out the terms of reconciliation and the path to forgiveness to the people of Israel in these warnings. Jehoiakim refused to heed the warnings and was eventually defeated and deported to Babylon, as prophesied by Jeremiah.

Nevertheless, God's word was not destroyed. Later in the chapter we see the Lord instruct Jeremiah to "Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned... and there were added besides unto them many like words" (vv. 28, 32). So despite man's refusal, the Lord still sends warnings of mercy to those who will hear and heed, from the times of His calls to Israel, through His calls to all today in His word. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).