***Jeremiah 6:16-30 Thus says the Lord: “Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’ 17Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’ But they said, ‘We will not listen.’ 18Therefore hear, you nations, And know, O congregation, what is among them. 19Hear, O earth! Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people – The fruit of their thoughts, Because they have not heeded My words Nor My law, but rejected it. 20For what purpose to Me Comes frankincense from Sheba, And sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, Nor your sacrifices sweet to Me.” 21Therefore thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people, And the fathers and the sons together shall fall on them. The neighbor and his friend shall perish.” 22Thus says the Lord: “Behold, a people comes from the north country, And a great nation will be raised from the farthest parts of the earth. 23They will lay hold on bow and spear; They are cruel and have no mercy; Their voice roars like the sea; And they ride on horses, As men of war set in array against you, O daughter of Zion.” 24We have heard the report of it;  
Our hands grow feeble. Anguish has taken hold of us, Pain as of a woman in labor. 25Do not go out into the field, Nor walk by the way. Because of the sword of the enemy, Fear is on every side. 26O daughter of my people, Dress in sackcloth And roll about in ashes! Make mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation; For the plunderer will suddenly come upon us.***

***27“I have set you as an assayer and a fortress among My people, That you may know and test their way. 28They are all stubborn rebels, walking as slanderers. They are bronze and iron, They are all corrupters; 29The bellows blow fiercely, The lead is consumed by the fire; The smelter refines in vain, For the wicked are not drawn off. 30People will call them rejected silver, Because the Lord has rejected them.”***

We’re finishing Jeremiah 6 tonight, in much the same way we finished Jeremiah 5. The people continue to refuse to hear. Jeremiah is doing the right things, bringing the right messages, being faithful to his calling, and yet the people refuse to turn. They are so enchanted and absorbed by the wicked and worldly results of their sin that they are blinded to the ways of God. They have a reprobate mind and are completely deceived. God is still calling, but the people have grown hard of hearing. Thus, the coming judgement is growing closer and closer, while the people fail to hear God’s trumpet call to repentance.

Verse 16 *Thus says the Lord: “Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’* God now turns His attention to the people, giving them wise counsel. The vision here is a group traveling, who stop and stop and consider the way they are traveling. Are they following sound directions? Ask for the old paths, giving the idea that we all know back to us – old roads that have been traveled again and again are familiar. When we become lost, we backtrack to the road we know. The old paths are the roads that the Godly patriarchs, kings, prophets, priests followed. God is saying imitate them. What wonderful advice for this day and age! When we return to the roads that led us to right relationship with God and one another, we find peace. The scripture says, “Then you will find rest for your souls”. Why? Because we have entered back into the protective Presence of God. God is telling Jerusalem to return and repent and He will restore their peace of mind, by His protection. But the people respond with belligerence and rebellion. Perhaps, they never said this out loud, but their actions communicated loudly. They refuse. They love their wickedness more than they love the relationship with God.

Verse 17 -*Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’ But they said, ‘We will not listen.* God continues to speak. He gave them prophets, Jeremiah being just one of many. They faithfully warned of sin and the coming judgement. Listen to the sound of the trumpet. This would have made sense to the people. Trumpets were used to sound the call for assembly. They were also used to warn of approaching danger. Watchmen would stand on hills, walls, or in towers and watch. When a potential threat was seen, they sounded the trumpet. The gates were closed, armies readied. The Bible uses the image of a watchman many times describing the warnings the prophets are sounding, but God also uses watchmen to describe the priests. God appointed Ezekiel a watchman. Isaiah calls the priests blind watchmen.

Verse 18 *Therefore hear, you nations, And know, O congregation, what is among them.* Hear nations – this is directed to the surrounding heathen nations – the judgement God is speaking. The coming calamities are not chance or just bad luck. They are judgements because the Jewish people dishonored and disobeyed God. *And know O congregation –* This is now directed at the Jewish people as a whole, both Israel and Judah. God has decreed judgement as punishment for dishonoring and disobeying Him.

Verse 19 *Hear, O earth! Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people – The fruit of their thoughts, Because they have not heeded My words Nor My law, but rejected it.* In verse 18, God addressed the heathen nations and the Jewish nation, Jew and Gentile. Now, He simply says earth, everyone. He speaks of the coming judgement, calamity. He calls it the fruit of their thoughts – their sin and wicked pursuits. They have sown and now they will reap. James 1:14-15 says  *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.* The people of the earth are about to see this judgement firsthand.

Verse 20 *For what purpose to Me Comes frankincense from Sheba, And sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, Nor your sacrifices sweet to Me.”* Sheba was a distant place in Arabia. Recall that, in 1 Kings 10, Solomon received the Queen of Sheba and she marveled at his wisdom. Sheba was well known for incense and perfumes. The people seek to hide their wickedness and corruption by burning sweet incense before God. This is no value whatsoever! God is not fooled. Their mind is reprobate and rebellious. To serve God, our mind and heart must first be right. Sweet cane was another form of offering and this too came from a far country. God pronounces the offerings and sacrifices unacceptable. 1 Samuel 15:22 tells us that obedience is better than sacrifice.

Verse 21-26 *Therefore thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people, And the fathers and the sons together shall fall on them. The neighbor and his friend shall perish.” 22Thus says the Lord: “Behold, a people comes from the north country, And a great nation will be raised from the farthest parts of the earth. 23They will lay hold on bow and spear; They are cruel and have no mercy; Their voice roars like the sea; And they ride on horses, As men of war set in array against you, O daughter of Zion.” 24We have heard the report of it; Our hands grow feeble. Anguish has taken hold of us, Pain as of a woman in labor. 25Do not go out into the field, Nor walk by the way. Because of the sword of the enemy, Fear is on every side. 26O daughter of my people, Dress in sackcloth And roll about in ashes! Make mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation; For the plunderer will suddenly come upon us.* ***Behold,*** *I will lay stumbling blocks before this people –* God will bring about their destruction, bringing calamity after calamity. Father and sons will fall together, neighbors and friends will perish – leaving the idea that everyone will be impacted by these calamities. Behold a people come – these are the Chaldeans, led by Nebuchadnezzar. A great nation from the farthest parts of the earth. Babylon is very far away and did indeed sweep in from the north. They bring bow and spear, are cruel and merciless. They shout and roar, as they attack. And they ride on horses – horses were very scarce in Judea. Their alliances with other nations often centered around being provided horses. Remember, in 2 Kings 18:23 *Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses—if you are able on your part to put riders on them!* The king of Assyria spoke these words more than 100 years before, through Rabshakeh. The people of Judah and Jerusalem have heard the fame of the Chaldeans and should feel a great fear, having a heart that melted like wax in fear and became weak. Go not forth into the fields – in other words, danger will be everywhere. No one will escape. O daughter of my people – this was a common way to start a lament in the time of Jeremiah. God is calling His people and no one is answering. Put on sackcloth, roll in ashes. The suffering will last a long time and the outcome very bitter. Mourn for an only son – as though the parents are now childless. To mourn for the loss of an only child represented the greatest grief in Jewish society and they would have understood this wording very well. The plunderer has not yet arrived, but God has spoken. All will be accomplished.

Verse 27 *“I have set you as an assayer and a fortress among My people, That you may know and test their way.* God now speak encouragement to Jeremiah, comparing him to a fortress among the people. No wickedness formed against him will prosper. Jeremiah is to test and know their actions and understand how they relate to God’s warnings. This holds the idea of a refiner of fine metal, who scrutinizes very closely the refined product. God is encouraging Jeremiah to speak more freely, with no fear and all authority, knowing that God is protecting him from harm. The refiners process would’ve been very familiar to the audience of that day.

Verse 28 *They are all stubborn rebels, walking as slanderers. They are bronze and iron, They are all corrupters;* The people are obstinate and stiff-necked, refusing to hear of change. They slander and tear down the prophets, causing the people to doubt the prophetic word. They are bronze and iron, not pure like gold and silver. They are outwardly showy like bronze and as obstinate as iron. They corrupt the purity of the people as a base metal corrupts the purity of silver.

Verses 29-30 *The bellows blow fiercely, The lead is consumed by the fire; The smelter refines in vain, For the wicked are not drawn off. 30 People will call them rejected silver, Because the Lord has rejected them.”* The bellows blow fiercely – all efforts to remove the impurity from the people has no effect. *The lead is consumed –* In these times, no one knew of quicksilver, so lead was used to draw out the impurities in the refining process. The heat is great and the lead cannot draw out the impurities of the people. The prophet is working in vain. The impurities are not drawn off, represented by the wicked in this verse. The prophet is doing the right things, but the people refuse to hear. People will call them rejected silver because the Lord has rejected them.

And so we leave Jeremiah tonight. God has encouraged him to stay the course, even as the people rebel. Wickedness blinds people completely. Like people today, the deception is taking hold and God is allowing it for those that have rejected Truth. May we always follow ask for the old paths, seek the good ways, and walk in the Truth of the Bible, no matter the world around us.