Tear it Down!
Jeremiah 1:4–10

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What we have to understand is this: Before converting to Christ, Christians are, at best, spiritual pacifists. Our agenda isn't to repel the forces of evil; we are content to "go with the flow." But when Christ redeems a person, it moves that person from spiritual neutrality to spiritual action. That's because God designed His Church to function as an army!

In the First Century, Christ and the Apostles used the Greek word "ecclesia" to identify the Church. The Greeks understood the word ecclesia/church to describe a group of people "called out" from civilian ranks and placed into military service. Think about that: The word the Bible uses to identify the Church is a military term. The Lord purposely compared His assemblage of followers to an army!

Notice the qualities of a highly trained army (ecclesia). Armies can be noisy or quiet. They are subject to commands. They use weapons. They are designed to function in unity. They function best when they are aggressive. Thus, the analogy makes perfect sense: A church, just like an army, functions best when it is unified, of one vision, aggressive, and under the command of Christ. When God spoke these militant words of our text to Jeremiah, He called Jeremiah to be "a one-man wrecking crew"! God told Jeremiah to: "uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (1:10). That's twice as much destroying and uprooting as constructing and planting.

When you apply that to child-rearing, you discover that the duty of building character and virtues into your child takes twice the energy to uproot negative traits than to infuse positive traits. From birth, human nature is inclined to stray from a propitious path. And the same is true for adults. It's imperative to build on principles of righteousness, but it takes double-effort to destroy bad attitudes, impure thoughts, and wrong behavior.

(**Harbinger**) That's the intent of today's message! It deals with God's command to destroy the spiritual strongholds that threaten your life and God's Kingdom. And that can only be done by getting militant toward certain attitudes, ideas, and behaviors.

(**Illustration**) Let me illustrate it this way. Awhile back, I watched a landscaping company clear a huge tract of land to make way for a huge Home Depot store. The bulldozers arrived and for days rumbled over the property, uprooting scores of trees. The bulldozers plowed down everything in the way and leveled the ground for a specific purpose. This uprooting and flattening process was needed to make way for the construction process. Farmers employ the same principle. Before planting, they first harrow, uproot, and soften the land. This process makes a harvest possible. And this principle applies to Christians.

Listen to God's word to Jeremiah: "I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow." I want you to notice the word "appoint." That word means deputy. God was deputizing Jeremiah for militant work. And Christians today are deputized for an aggressive, uprooting, and harrowing work too! Like John the Baptist, we're called to lay the axe to the root of the tree (MAT 3:10) and deal with sinful issues that would destroy our lives.

I want to reiterate, planting and building and mending are necessary, but Ecclesiastes 3 says there's also a time to "uproot . . . destroy . . . scatter . . . rip apart . . . [and go to] war." As the Captain of our Salvation, Jesus illustrated the need to battle our foe. It's interesting that Jesus created a "stir" everywhere He went, even though the Bible calls Him "the Lamb of God."

> You don't expect a lamb to overturn the tables in the Temple, but He did!
>
> You don't expect a lamb to call Herod a "fox," but He did!
>
> You don't expect a lamb to indict the religious establishment with hypocrisy, pride, heresy, corruption, and murder, but He did (Matthew 23).

(**Insight**) I have a question: If the world couldn't handle Christ as "the Lamb" 2000 years ago, how will it handle Him as "the Lion" at His Second Coming when He "puts all enemies under His feet" If the world couldn't contain Christ as 'the Lamb," it sure won't contain Him as "the Lion"! And if Jesus, our Example, engaged in spiritual warfare, it's our commission too.

> It's why Ephesians 6 tells us to wear "the whole armor of God."

It's why 2 Corinthians 6:7 says we've been given "weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left."

It's why 2 Corinthians 10:4 says God has given us "divine power to demolish strongholds."

It's why Timothy was told to "fight the good fight of the faith."

The enemy of our souls is routed and defeated by aggressive, militant action!

(Transition) As warriors, what does God demand us to combat? Well, I suggest that Believers of every generation are commissioned to decry the evil of their day.

Believers Must Decry Evil

When John the Baptist swung the prophetic axe at his generation, it struck sharply and deeply.

He charged Herod with a political scandal.

He warned Rome's soldiers against extortion and demanded that business owners treat their employees fairly.

He told everyone to be compassionate and share with others (Luke 3:10-14).

John wasn't bashful about uprooting the evils of his generation. And there are issues we must resist today:

A. There is a widespread belief that life has no supreme purpose. That life's primary purpose involves avoiding pain and sacrifice and experiencing happiness. When I say widespread, 58% of Americans believe their primary purpose is simply to enjoy life, not to achieve a divine purpose.

For many people, preparing for the future isn't important; it's living for the moment that brings satisfaction. People believe they're wasting time by doing things that don't create immediate gratification or reward.

(**Example**) Can you imagine an infantry adopting this code? What if a Private said to his Officer: "Sargent, let's forego the five-mile run and calisthenics. I don't feel like exercising, training, or learning the secrets of counterintelligence." How prepared do you think militia forces would be should it allow Privates to dictate the agenda? However, there is convincing evidence that suggests lethargy prevails in many aspects of our culture:

> Americans spend more than three billion dollars a year on entertainment.
>
> Each year, America graduates 1,000,000 high school students who cannot read or write at an eighth-grade level.
>
> America now ranks forty-ninth in literacy among the 158 nations evaluated.
>
> Youth spend seven out of seventeen awakened hours in media entertainment.
>
> 72% of Americans believe God blesses them so they can enjoy life as much as possible.

And make no mistake, there are consequences to a listless, carefree, complacent, "others-owe-me" lifestyle. It will ultimately debilitate a society or nation! As Christians, we have a moral responsibility to one another. We must lovingly challenge the attitude that suggests life is about personal pleasure and living at the expense of others.

The truth is, we're not on this planet just to get blessed. Genesis 12 says we're here to be a blessing!

> We're not here to figure out how much pain and sacrifice we can avoid. Jesus said personal fulfillment comes when we "deny self, take up our cross, and follow Him."
>
> We aren't here to focus on ourselves. Deuteronomy 6:5 says we're created to "love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, and strength."

We aren't here hoard wealth; we're here to invest in heavenly rewards where moth and rust cannot corrupt. to

B. Another lie we need to tear down is this: There are no moral absolutes. Right and wrong depend on the situation and the individual. Unfortunately, only one in every four adults, and even fewer teenagers, believe truth exists.

That's what today's culture war is all about. It's a theoretical war of words coming at us from the arts, educators, entertainment, and the courts. And there's nothing more menacing than skillful orators with a platform to distort truth. They warp conventional standards, poke fun at the Bible, and belittle the precepts of Christianity.

When history chronicles twentieth-century America, I believe the indictment against this generation will be that it discredited moral absolutes. I sincerely doubt that most Americans could suitably define morality. I'm serious. This is about how I believe their answer would go: "I believe each individual is responsible for working out their own morality as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else. What's right or wrong for me doesn't necessarily hold true for you."

There are serious consequences to this attitude. When people reject an absolute standard of right and wrong and define their own morality, it becomes an outright rejection of God Himself and His Word. There is a righteous standard, and God distinguishes between good and evil, whether anybody else does! The Bible says all men are sinners and need to repent of their false beliefs, wrong attitudes, and sinful behavior.

(**Illustration**) Mahatma Gandhi was a social revolutionary. He skillfully directed India toward freedom without resorting to violence. In life, he was a social champion, but in death, he was fearful. Fifteen years before dying, he wrote: "I must tell you in all humility that Hinduism, as I know it, entirely satisfies my soul, fills my whole being, and I find a solace... that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount." You know, it's pretty arrogant to belittle the greatest sermon ever preached from the greatest revolutionary that ever lived. But as fate would have it, just before his death, Gandhi wrote: "My days are numbered. I am not likely to live very long—perhaps a year or a little more. For the first time in fifty years, I find myself in the sloughs of despond. All about me is darkness; I am praying for light." (P.L. Tan, 7,700 Illustrations, Assurance Publishers, 1979.)

When people reject God's revelation of truth, they are wide-open to deception! The consequences of deception can be harmful. Not just disappointing; damaging! Not just hollow, hurt feelings; dangerous, disastrous! That's why we must engage in spiritual warfare and warn others. We can't hope for the angels to deliver revelation to the misguided masses; we must step in and get involved! 2 Corinthians 10:5 says we are called to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God." Jeremiah said we are "deputized" or "authorized" for this.

When you hear the secular media, it makes you think Christians are intolerant, emboldened hate-mongers trying to shove Christianity down everyone's throats. That's not so! And there is evidence to prove that. Let me give you some amazing statistics about who is influencing whom today.

> More non-Christians (49%) tried to influence others on an issue than did Christians (47%).
>
> More non-Christians (42%) attended a community meeting on a local topic than did Christians (37%).
>
> More non-Christians (10%) participated in a boycott or demonstration than did Christians (7%).
>
> And more non-Christians (10%) wrote a company protesting their ethics than did non-Christians (9%).

It's time for Believers, "seasoned with grace" and humility, to challenge some things! We need to challenge the worldly arguments that contradict God's Word or people will be swept, unabated, into hell. It's our duty to rescue the perishing. Whether or not the world likes it, God says the Church is the repository of truth! That's what Paul meant when he called it "the pillar and ground of the truth." And that's why Christians are "deputized" to oppose arguments and attitudes that are hostile to Christ.

If you see walls of separation arising in your home, it's your prophetic and priestly duty to tear them down. When there's a constant drumbeat of anger, criticism, self-centeredness, or unruly behavior, God expects Christians to put on the "breastplate of righteousness" and lovingly deal with it.

Let's pause for a moment. Is there anything in your life that needs uprooting?

Perhaps a wrong belief system?

Do you entertain the assumption that God doesn't love you?

Doesn't He have a higher plan for your life?

That you're stuck and you'll never advance?

Tear down that wrong thought and let the Holy Spirit lead you into the truth of God's Word. Again, some obstacles must be flattened before God can construct pillars of righteousness:

In Noah's day, civilization was completely corrupt. Before God could reestablish righteousness, He had to totally destroy the earth with a flood.

Before the Hebrew people could build their Kingdom, God commanded Joshua to uproot Israel's enemies and cleanse the land.

And this is the underlying message of the book of Revelation. In one final devastating swoop, God will shatter the world's kingdoms before He establishes the new millennium. He creates upheaval on the land, sea, and sky and subdues the nations. He destroys the Anti-Christ and False Prophet. And then He sends the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to establish His kingdom of righteousness.

Some obstacles must be destroyed before righteousness can assume its place! That's what this message is emphasizing. Before you can construct, you must first clear!

Now, let me aim this message directly at your soul and show you why some things need to be torn down. The Christian's ultimate objective is to escape this sphere of sin and abide in the presence of God. Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (NIV)

You must aggressively protect your soul because it is vulnerable. Your soul is the "filter" that sifts and sieves everything you encounter. Whatever you experience in life is first "filtered" through the soul. That means the soul (our mind, heart, and will) is vulnerable to everything it encounters. Here's what you must understand about your soul: There is no filter for the filter! Your soul is exposed to the coarse shock of life.

When your eyes suddenly see a vile image, there's nothing to alter the image or "filter" it. When your ears hear wicked language, it resounds unmuted on the soul. That's why I say: "There is no filter for the filter"! And that's why your soul needs constant attention. You must be filled with the Word, faith, prayer, and the Holy Spirit so you can react responsibly to the unfiltered parts of life. It's why you need to develop a militant, spiritual posture against whatever threatens your welfare.

Conclusion

(Illustration) Some months ago, I watched a wrecking crew raze a bank so a drug store could be constructed. In no time, the heavy equipment demolished the walls of that bank, and nothing was left standing but the vault. The vault is the most significant part of any bank. Interestingly enough, while the walls of the bank fell quickly, it took days of thrashing against that vault to destroy it. That crew pounded away at layer after layer of cement and steel reinforcement, wrapping the vault. Finally, after a three-day assault, the vault succumbed to the pounding. That bank was serious about protecting its vital interests —its silver, gold, and documents.

What is the most valuable part of your life? Seek to protect it, in Jesus' Name.
eek to protect it, in Jesus' Name.