



Daily Verse and Comment

Jeremiah 12:1-4

(1) Righteous *are* You, O LORD, that I might plead with You; yet let me speak with You about *Your* judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? *Why* are all *they* happy who deal treacherously? (2) You have planted them; yea, they take root. They grow, yea, they bring forth fruit. You *are* near in their mouth and far from their reins. (3) But You, O LORD, know me. You have seen me and tried my heart toward You. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and devote them for the day of slaughter. (4) How long shall the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither from the evil of those who dwell in it? The beasts and the birds have been destroyed because they said, "He shall not see our final end."

A Faithful Version

Jeremiah, like Baruch, has become discouraged by the turbulent maelstrom of events around him, the confusion and destruction that always accompany the unraveling of a nation. Yet, the prophet's complaint is more focused than that of his scribe's. Moreover, Jeremiah's complaint does not betray the self-absorption that Baruch's grumbling exhibits. Instead, Jeremiah's complaint is oriented outside himself. It is a "green" complaint, as we would say today: The land, he declares, mourns, the herbs everywhere wither, the animals and birds are gone because the residents of the land are evil.

It is clear that the natural environment of Judah was languishing as a result of mismanagement at the hands of selfish, exploitive people. Jeremiah did not limit culpability to Judah's leaders, but speaks more generally of the "wicked" (verse 1) or of "those who dwell there" (verse 4), who have "taken root" (verse 2), that is, become established to the point that they are prospering due to their environmentally destructive activities.

Jeremiah's complaint, therefore, has at its heart the issue of prosperity on the part of the wicked, people without scruples who take advantage of others and

circumstances for their own gain. Why does [God](#) permit the wicked to prosper? The psalmist Asaph broached this issue in [Psalm 73:1-28](#). Asaph comes to understand that a time will come when, “in a moment,” God will “destroy those who destroy the earth,” as John states it in [Revelation 11:18](#). Solomon writes in [Ecclesiastes 8:11](#), “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Sooner or later, though, their sins and crimes catch up to them, and divine justice—destruction and death—follow.

— Charles Whitaker

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