

WHEN FOOTMEN BECOME HORSES

PART ONE

THE PROPHET UNDER PRESSURE

A Five-Day Devotional from Jeremiah 12:1–5

SUNDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2026

*God receives the honest burden of a faithful servant, then
corrects his perspective and prepares his soul.*

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCHES OF GREAT BRITAIN

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THIS WEEK

This devotional continues the message preached on Sunday, 4 October 2026. Read the assigned passages slowly, then work through the devotional, reflection questions, and prayer. Each day is designed for approximately four to six minutes of reading, with additional time for personal prayer and Scripture meditation.

Weekly theme: God receives the honest burden of a faithful servant, then corrects his perspective and prepares his soul.

Day 1	Settle God's Character First	3
Monday, 5 October 2026		
Day 2	When Wickedness Seems To Win	8
Tuesday, 6 October 2026		
Day 3	Near In The Mouth, Far From The Heart	13
Wednesday, 7 October 2026		
Day 4	When Opposition Becomes Personal	18
Thursday, 8 October 2026		
Day 5	When God Reorients The Weary	23
Friday, 9 October 2026		

DAY 1 | MONDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2026

SETTLE GOD'S CHARACTER FIRST

READ: Jeremiah 12:1; Psalm 145:17

*“Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee:
yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments.”*

JEREMIAH 12:1

DEVOTIONAL

Jeremiah begins his complaint with a confession: “Righteous art thou, O LORD.” That order is not accidental. Before he asks why treacherous men prosper, he settles what he knows about God. He does not understand the Lord's providence, but he refuses to reinterpret the Lord's character through the narrow window of his present pain.

That is one of the first disciplines of faith under pressure. Confusing circumstances often tempt us to work backwards. We look at disappointment, delay, injustice, or unanswered prayer and then draw conclusions about God. Jeremiah does the opposite. He begins with what is eternally true and brings what is temporarily confusing beneath it. “The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Psalm 145:17). Circumstances change; His character does not.

This does not require us to pretend that everything makes sense. Jeremiah says, “yet let me talk with thee.” Faith is not frightened by an honest question. God is not threatened by the tears, weariness, or perplexity of His children. The danger begins when we approach Him as a judge seated above His throne instead of a servant bowed before it. Reverence gives honesty a safe place to speak.

There may be something in your life today that you cannot explain. Perhaps you have been faithful and still faced loss. Perhaps someone who acted deceitfully appears to be succeeding. Perhaps ministry has demanded more than you expected, or a prayer has remained unanswered longer than you imagined. You may bring that burden to God. But before you describe the burden, confess the truth: God is righteous, God is wise, God is good, and God has not changed.

The stability of the Christian life is not found in possessing every answer. It is found in knowing the One who does. When the mind cannot trace His hand, the heart can still trust His character. Begin there today. Settle who God is before you try to understand what God has allowed.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Before checking messages or beginning the next demanding task, write four short statements that begin with “God is.” Use truths clearly revealed in Scripture: God is righteous, God is faithful, God is wise, and God is good. Then name the circumstance you do not understand and deliberately place it beneath those truths. This is not positive thinking; it is biblical ordering. Return to those statements whenever the burden tries to become the lens through which you interpret God. Let what is eternally true govern what is temporarily unclear.

REFLECT

- *What circumstance has tempted you to question what you already know about God?*
- *Which truth about God's character do you need to confess before bringing Him your questions?*

PRAY

Righteous Lord, I do not understand everything You have allowed, but I know that You are holy, wise, and good. Keep my burden from becoming rebellion. Help me bring every honest question beneath the authority of Your unchanging character. Amen.

DAY 2 | TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2026

WHEN WICKEDNESS SEEMS TO WIN

READ: Jeremiah 12:1–2; Psalm 73:16–17

*“Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?
wherefore are all they happy that deal very
treacherously?”*

JEREMIAH 12:1

DEVOTIONAL

Jeremiah was troubled because the visible world did not seem to match the moral government of God. Treacherous people were not merely surviving; they appeared to be flourishing. They had taken root, grown, and brought forth fruit. The prophet knew that God was righteous, yet everything in front of him seemed to favour those who were not.

Every thoughtful believer eventually meets this tension. Why does a liar advance while an honest person pays a price? Why can error gather a crowd while truth is resisted? Why does compromise sometimes appear profitable? The pain is especially sharp when faithfulness feels costly and wickedness looks easy.

Asaph wrestled with the same problem in Psalm 73. He admitted that his feet were almost gone when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. His turning point came when he entered the sanctuary of God: “then understood I their end.” The sanctuary did not change God's verdict; it changed Asaph's vantage point. He had been measuring the whole story by one scene. In God's presence he remembered that present prosperity is not final approval.

A tree may look healthy while disease is already working beneath its bark. A ministry may appear successful while departing from Scripture. A person may gain influence while losing integrity. God is never deceived by appearances, and delayed judgment is not absent judgment. He sees the root, the fruit, the motive, and the end.

The believer must avoid two errors. Do not deny that injustice hurts, but do not let the hurt persuade you that God has surrendered His throne. Your responsibility is not to force providence to move according to your timetable. Your responsibility is to remain faithful while God unfolds the whole story. Eternity will correct every false impression created by the present moment.

Do not envy what you would never want to answer for. Do not abandon obedience because disobedience appears to be succeeding. The final chapter belongs to God, and the Judge of all the earth will do right.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Limit how often you rehearse the apparent success of the person or practice troubling you. Instead, read Psalm 73 slowly and mark the change that occurs when Asaph enters God's presence. Pray for justice without feeding resentment. Then choose one act of integrity that might cost you something today. Faithfulness becomes practical when we refuse to imitate the shortcuts we resent in others. You cannot control when God settles every account, but you can ensure that another person's compromise does not become permission for your own.

REFLECT

- *Where are you tempted to confuse visible success with God's approval?*
- *How would an eternal perspective change your response to an injustice you see today?*

PRAY

Lord, guard me from envy and short-sighted judgment. When evil appears to prosper, draw me into Your presence and restore an eternal perspective. Keep me faithful to truth even when compromise seems easier. Amen.

DAY 3 | WEDNESDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2026

NEAR IN THE MOUTH, FAR FROM THE HEART

READ: Jeremiah 12:2–3; Isaiah 29:13

“Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.”

JEREMIAH 12:2

DEVOTIONAL

The people troubling Jeremiah knew religious language. God was near in their mouths. They could speak about the Lord, use His name, and maintain the appearance of devotion. Yet He was far from their reins—the inward seat of affection, motive, and direction. Their vocabulary sounded spiritual while their hearts remained unsubmitted.

Open unbelief is painful, but religious hypocrisy can be even more exhausting. It borrows the language of faith while resisting the authority of God. It can say “Lord” without obeying Him, defend a tradition without loving truth, or appear active in church while nurturing secret rebellion. The mouth may impress people; the heart is open before God.

This passage must first search us before it is used to diagnose others. It is easy to recognise inconsistency in another person. It is harder to ask whether our own words have travelled farther than our obedience. We may sing about surrender while protecting one forbidden area. We may speak of prayer while rarely praying. We may affirm the authority of Scripture and still ignore what it plainly says about forgiveness, purity, giving, witness, or faithfulness to the local church.

Jeremiah could say, “But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee.” He did not claim sinless perfection. He appealed to the perfect knowledge of God. The Lord saw beyond the public message and examined the private man. That examination is not merely threatening; it is merciful. The God who exposes distance in the heart also calls us back into fellowship.

Ask the Lord to close the distance between profession and practice. Let the truth you speak become the truth by which you live. Christianity is not performance before an audience; it is a real walk with God. The goal is not simply to sound faithful, but to be faithful when no one is listening.

Words matter, but words alone cannot substitute for a surrendered heart. Let God be near not only in your mouth today, but in your motives, choices, habits, and affections.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Choose one familiar Christian phrase you often use —perhaps “I am trusting God,” “I will pray,” or “The Bible is my authority.” Ask what visible action would make that statement true today. If you promised prayer, stop and pray specifically. If Scripture is your authority, obey the command you have delayed. If you say you trust God, release the outcome you are still attempting to control. A sincere walk with God is strengthened whenever language becomes obedience. Close the distance between the mouth and the heart one decision at a time.

REFLECT

- *Where is there a gap between your Christian vocabulary and your daily obedience?*
- *What specific act of surrender would bring your practice into agreement with your profession?*

PRAY

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Expose every place where my words are stronger than my walk. Bring my motives, habits, and affections under Your rule, and make my private life true to my public profession. Amen.

DAY 4 | THURSDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2026

WHEN OPPOSITION BECOMES PERSONAL

READ: Jeremiah 11:21; Psalm 55:12–14; John 1:11

“Prophecy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand.”

JEREMIAH 11:21

DEVOTIONAL

The men threatening Jeremiah were not distant enemies. They were men of Anathoth, his own hometown. Familiar streets and familiar faces became the setting of rejection. Their message was blunt: stop preaching, or die. The wound of chapter twelve is deeper when we remember what happened in chapter eleven.

Opposition from strangers can sting, but betrayal from familiar people cuts. David said that if an enemy had reproached him, he could have borne it. His deepest pain came from “a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.” Jeremiah knew that sorrow. So did our Lord: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11).

Personal rejection can quietly change the direction of a servant. It can produce bitterness, make us suspicious of everyone, or tempt us to withhold obedience until people appreciate it. Yet the conduct of others cannot be allowed to determine whether we continue doing the will of God. Jeremiah's pain was real, but his calling remained.

This does not mean you must deny the wound or call betrayal harmless. Biblical forgiveness is not pretending that sin did not occur. It is refusing to take God's place as judge and refusing to let another person's wrong become the ruling power in your heart. You can carry the wound to the Lord without carrying vengeance into tomorrow.

Christ is our pattern and our strength. He understands rejection perfectly, yet He did not allow rejection to turn Him from the Father's will. He loved truth, loved sinners, and went steadfastly toward the cross. Because He lives in the believer, you do not have to choose between tenderness and faithfulness. You can grieve without quitting, forgive without approving wrong, and continue obeying without becoming hard.

Do not let familiar opposition make you unfamiliar with grace. Place the wound in God's hands. Let Him guard your spirit, correct what needs correcting, and keep your feet on the path of obedience.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Write the name of the person connected to the wound, then pray three things: that God would guard your spirit, that truth and righteousness would prevail, and that the person would respond to God's work. If a wise conversation or boundary is needed, plan it without rehearsing a speech of revenge. Forgiveness may need to be reaffirmed many times as emotion returns. Each time, surrender the right to retaliate and choose obedience again. You are not declaring the wrong unimportant; you are declaring that Christ, not the wound, will govern your future.

REFLECT

- *Has a personal wound begun to influence your obedience or your attitude toward others?*
 - *What would it look like to place both the hurt and the outcome in God's hands today?*
-

PRAY

Lord Jesus, You understand rejection and betrayal. Heal what has been wounded in me, keep bitterness from taking root, and help me remain tender, forgiving, and faithful. Let no person's conduct turn me from Your will. Amen.

DAY 5 | FRIDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2026

WHEN GOD REORIENTS THE WEARY

READ: Jeremiah 12:5; Romans 8:28

“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?”

JEREMIAH 12:5

DEVOTIONAL

Jeremiah asked God to explain the wicked. God answered by preparing the prophet. The Lord did not provide a complete timetable of judgment or uncover every hidden reason behind His providence. Instead, He redirected Jeremiah's attention from the people around him to the endurance being formed within him.

At first, that answer may sound severe. Jeremiah is already weary, and God speaks of horses and a swelling river. Yet the question is mercy. The Lord sees what Jeremiah cannot see. Greater responsibility and sharper resistance lie ahead, so God addresses present weakness before the future battle arrives.

We often ask God to remove the pressure while He is using the pressure to deepen us. We want a smaller assignment; He gives a larger view of Himself. We want circumstances explained; He teaches us to trust. We want relief from the footmen; He begins preparing us for horses. This does not mean every sorrow can be reduced to a neat lesson, nor does it mean grief should be hurried. It means no experience lies outside the sovereign reach of God.

Romans 8:28 does not call all things good. It declares that God works through all things “for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” The treachery around Jeremiah was not good. The rejection was not good. The threat against his life was not good. But God remained able to use even those realities to prepare His servant.

Your present burden may be doing more than you can see. It may be exposing self-reliance, strengthening conviction, enlarging compassion, or teaching you to pray with greater depth. Do not merely ask, “How quickly can I escape this?” Ask, “Lord, how must I know You here? What must be strengthened before the next assignment?”

Bring the burden to God, but do not enthrone it. Let His word have the final voice. The first work of grace may not be a change in circumstances; it may be a change in perspective. The God who was righteous before the question remains righteous after it, and the servant who yields to His reorientation will not suffer in vain.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Draw two columns on a page. In the first, write what you are asking God to change around you. In the second, write what the pressure may be revealing within you: fear, impatience, self-reliance, need for wisdom, or need for endurance. Pray through both columns. It is right to ask for changed circumstances, but also ask for a changed servant. Finish by identifying one lesson you do not want to waste. Preparation becomes visible when present pain produces a specific movement toward prayer, truth, humility, or faithful action.

REFLECT

- *Are you asking only for escape, or are you also asking how God wants to prepare you?*
 - *What weakness has the present pressure revealed that should now be brought to Christ?*
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PRAY

Father, reorient my weary heart. Do not let present pain define my future usefulness. Use what I cannot yet understand to deepen dependence, strengthen conviction, and prepare me for every assignment You have chosen. Amen.

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THE PROPHET UNDER PRESSURE

*God receives the honest burden of a faithful servant, then
corrects his perspective and prepares his soul.*

*The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all
his works.*

PSALM 145:17