

Jeremiah 24 — Good and Bad Figs: God’s Sovereign Mercy and Human Response

1. The Vision of Two Baskets (Jeremiah 24:1–3)

“The Lord showed me, and there were two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord, after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten, they were so bad.” (Jeremiah 24:1–2)

The setting is after the first deportation to Babylon. Among those taken were the young nobles Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah—known better as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The city still stood, and Zedekiah reigned in Jerusalem, but Jeremiah saw that God was already making a moral division among His people.

Two baskets appeared before the temple—one filled with good figs, the other with rotten figs. This wasn’t about agriculture but about character. Both groups belonged to Judah, both were under God’s hand, yet their responses to Him would determine their destiny.

God asked Jeremiah, *“What do you see?”*—a question He often uses to sharpen spiritual perception. The prophet replied, *“Figs—the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad.”* When the Lord opens our eyes to reality, it’s never for curiosity—it’s always for repentance or reassurance.

2. The Good Figs: God’s Discipline as a Blessing (Jeremiah 24:4–7)

“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.’” (Jeremiah 24:5–7)

The people who had gone into exile—those who endured correction—were the good figs. God says something surprising: *“I sent them for their good.”* What looked like punishment was actually preservation. They would be purified in captivity and later restored with new hearts.

This reveals something profound about God’s dealings with His people. The Lord’s discipline is not destruction—it’s redemption in disguise. Hebrews 12:11 reminds us,

“No chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

God’s promise to the exiles includes four beautiful verbs: I will watch over them... I will bring them back... I will build them... I will plant them. He doesn’t abandon His own. Even in Babylon, He was working for their good—just as Romans 8:28 declares that “all things work together for good to those who love God.”

Practical Reflection

Sometimes the Lord must uproot us from comfort to restore our hearts. What seems like loss may be the hand of a loving Father preventing greater ruin. God's goal is always relational: *"They shall be My people, and I will be their God."*

3. The Bad Figs: Rebellion That Refuses to Repent (Jeremiah 24:8–10)

"And as the bad figs which cannot be eaten, they are so bad—surely thus says the Lord—so will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, his princes, the residue of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt: I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth, for their harm, to be a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they are consumed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers." (Jeremiah 24:8–10)

The bad figs symbolize those who refused correction—the proud and rebellious who stayed behind, trusting in their walls instead of their God. They looked "free," but were slaves to sin and judgment awaited them. What they called safety was really separation from God's mercy.

Rebellion always rots the soul. These leaders thought they were preserving the nation, but by resisting the Lord's word through Jeremiah, they brought total ruin. Their independence from God was not strength but decay.

Reflection

Jeremiah 24 shows that God works sovereignly and relationally. He acts for good even when people cannot see it, yet He never overrides their moral responsibility. Those who submit to His correction find life; those who resist His truth harden into ruin.

This is not about arbitrary election or dispensational timelines—it is about the moral order of God's kingdom: humility leads to mercy; pride leads to judgment. God's plan is not mechanical but moral—He draws all, but only those who respond in faith and repentance are transformed.

Jesus Christ fulfills the promise of the Good Figs—He is the true Righteous One who was taken, bruised, and "carried away" for our good. His cross looked like defeat, but it was God's redemptive design. Through His blood, He offers us a new heart and an everlasting covenant.

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them." (Hebrews 10:16)

Practical Application

1. Trust God's discipline. The same hand that wounds also heals. When God uproots you, it is to replant you in richer soil.
2. Beware spiritual pride. Zedekiah and his counselors claimed to defend the nation but defied God's Word. Pride blinds us to the warnings of Scripture.

3. Keep your heart tender. The difference between good and bad figs was not circumstance but response. When rebuked, turn quickly to the Lord.
4. Encourage others in captivity. Like Daniel, you can bloom in Babylon. God's presence is not confined to location but to relationship.

A Challenge for Believers

Are you among the good figs—submitting to God's refining hand—or are you resisting His Word like the bad figs who refused correction?

When God removes comforts or allows hardship, do you interpret it as punishment or as loving discipline? Remember His promise: *"I will set My eyes upon them for good."* Yield your heart fully to Him. Let His pruning prepare you for greater fruitfulness.

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."
(First Peter 5:6)

Let your response to trial prove your trust in His goodness.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Life without God is like a tree without roots—it cannot stand when judgment comes. But the Lord offers you mercy today through Jesus Christ, who shed His blood on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead, proving that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

The same God who said to the exiles, *"I will give them a heart to know Me,"* now offers to give you a new heart—one that knows and loves Him. You cannot earn it; you can only receive it by faith.

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (Second Corinthians 5:17)

Pray sincerely:

"Lord Jesus, I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. Forgive me, cleanse me, and make me new. I surrender to You as my Savior and Lord. Give me a heart to know You and to walk with You all my days. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer, trust that He has heard you. Begin reading the Bible and growing in a community of believers who teach the Word of God faithfully.

Closing Reflection

The vision of the two baskets of figs reveals that God's judgment and mercy often unfold at the same time. For some, captivity became correction that led to restoration. For others, pride led to destruction.

The difference was not in God's heart—but in theirs.

The Lord still sets His eyes for good on those who turn to Him. The same Jesus who was “taken” for our good now reigns forever as The Lord Our Righteousness. His blood saves; His Spirit renews.

“They shall be My people, and I will be their God.” (Jeremiah 24:7)

Choose today to be among the good figs—those who return to Him with their whole heart.