

JEREMIAH: SHINING AS SPIRITUAL TWILIGHT FALLS
"Part III: Insurance From Defeat Before Foes By Staying In God's Will"
(Jeremiah 26:1-24)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many people wish that they could discern **how** to relate to abusive parties they **must** encounter in the home, at work or elsewhere, and that while enjoying God's blessing:

(1) The secular world is practically crying for answers here. While entering my house and seeing a brief glimpse of the Sally Jesse Raphael talk show, I was impressed by the degree of pain people are experiencing in families because they must relate to abusive people.

The particular show pictured parents who were trying to deal with abusive children.

(2) However, you face this problem not only on national television, but in our area. This week while at breakfast, Nadine shared with me of a case in our town where a girl my daughter Joanne knows has been beaten by a boyfriend, and the case has come to trial.

(3) Following last Sunday's message out of the book of Jeremiah, I found myself talking with people who have faced abusive relationships from which they cannot flee, and who have wondered how to function in **having** to relate in them, and do so with God's blessing!

Is there an answer from God on dealing with verbal or emotional or physical abuse where those in the relationships involved cannot just up and leave due to livelihood reasons? What about those who HAVE to face emotionally abusive people in a marriage, at work or elsewhere -- HOW can they DO that with God's BLESSING?!

One of the blessings of enjoying God's leading in the pastorate is that He makes everything fall into a neat little package for each sermon's ministry. Today's experience is no different, for we find Jeremiah facing and **overcoming** defeat in the midst of abusive people! **Today's** message thus acts to answer the questions asked of me **last** Sunday following the worship service.

In fact, God has provided a **CLEAR study** that **contrasts** two prophets, Jeremiah and Urijah, a **contrast** providing a *lesson* in **HOW to SUCCEED** versus **HOW to FAIL** when one *must* face emotionally or verbally or physically abusive parties . . .

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section as follows . . .)

Need: "When one has no choice BUT to face verbal, emotional or similar abuse where he MUST live or work, HOW can he ever be PRODUCTIVE there? What would GOD suggest from Scripture?!"

- I. **Jeremiah was called to prophesy GRIM words to abusive people:**
 - A. As we have discovered, Jeremiah was *naturally afraid* of those he was to address in Judah because of their **abusiveness**, Jer. 1:8, 18-19.
 - B. Added to this concern was the **inflammatory** message of **divine judgment** Jeremiah was called to give unto them, Jeremiah 1:14-17.
- II. **When Jeremiah actually performed God's assignment, and gave his message of a call to repentance, the response was FRIGHTFUL:**
 - A. On one occasion, God called Jeremiah to pronounce the destruction of Jerusalem if the people did not repent, Jeremiah 26:1-6.
 - B. When Jeremiah actually obeyed God and delivered the message, he was met by a death threat from the hearers, Jer. 26:7-9.
- III. **However, BEFORE entering into his mission, Jeremiah received divine ASSURANCES of PROTECTION providing he fearlessly obeyed God and did not cower before his hearers in HARD times:**
 - A. In Jeremiah 1:17, God warned Jeremiah not to fear his hearers or God would cause Jeremiah to be terrified in defeat before them!
 - B. Yet, **were** Jeremiah to do God's will, God would protect him so he could keep functioning in spite of the hearers' responses, 1:8, 18-19.
 1. Jeremiah's faith in God's protection while delivering his messages would supply Jeremiah with **courage** before his hearers, 1:18-19a.
 2. That courage would be rewarded by God's **deliverances** like his being snatched out of a closing trap at the last moment, Jer. 1:19b.
 - a. The verb in Jeremiah 1:19 translated "deliver" (KJV) or "rescue" (NIV) is better rendered "snatch away" as a sudden, dramatic move from danger, cf. Biblia Hebraica, p. 704; B.D.B., Hebrew and English Lexicon of the O. T., p. 664.
 - b. That meant Jeremiah would have to trust God in threatening situations right up until God delivered him from his oppressors.
- IV. **The CONTRAST between victory and defeat in this very difficult endeavor is played out for us in Jeremiah 26:10-24:**
 - A. On the **one** hand, **Jeremiah** obeyed God by staying **fearless**, so God rewarded him by a stay of execution by his opponents:

1. The angered princes of Judah sat down to do judgment on Jeremiah in the entry gate of the Lord's temple, Jeremiah 26:10.
 2. There he faced the **humanly dreadful** event of being charged with a capital crime for predicting the fall of Jerusalem, and that by the priests and false prophets unto the princes and the people, 26:11.
 3. **However**, Jeremiah **responded** by trusting God's promise of protection and obeying God in fearlessly repeating his message of a call to repentance, 26:12-13. He added that were he to be slain, the event would incur God's wrath, for God had sent him, Jer. 26:14f.
 4. At this point, apparently **God** brought to memory the predictions of a former godly prophet, Micah, and how his similar prophesy of judgment had proved to be true in the days of Hezekiah, 26:16-19:
 - a. They recalled that Micah had warned of judgment for sin against God in Hezekiah's day, and that Hezekiah had heeded and not harmed Micah to his blessing, Jeremiah 26:16, 17-19b.
 - b. Thus, these princes felt it best to stick with proven precedents and not harm Jeremiah lest they incur divine wrath, Jer. 26:19c.
- B. On the **other** hand, **another** man who copied Jeremiah's message **DISOBEYED Scripture** when threatened by the **same rulers**:
1. Another prophet, Urijah predicted judgment against Jerusalem, preaching in the name of the Lord, Jeremiah 26:20.
 2. Judah's king then sought to execute Urijah, Jeremiah 26:21a.
 3. Urijah responded by fleeing into **Egypt** for **refuge opposite God's revealed will** in the **written Scriptures of Deuteronomy 17:16**.
- C. As a **result**, the **destinies** of Jeremiah and Urijah sharply **contrasted**:
1. As Urijah **fled** into **Egypt** in **violation** of **Scripture**, he was left to fend on his own, and was captured and killed, Jeremiah 26:21b-23.
 2. However, in **obedient** Jeremiah's behalf, God **rewarded** him by keeping His promise to rescue him (cf. Jer. 1:17-19) in raising up an official, Ahikam to **keep** Jeremiah **SAFE** from death, Jer. 26:24!

Application: If one MUST face abuse, he WILL enjoy God's HELP to FUNCTION so as to DO God's will PROVIDING he submits to God's will for ALL of his life's PATHWAYS: (a) This involves faith in Christ for salvation from sin (Jn. 3:16) and (b) obeying GOD'S WORD for ALL that one's marital, family, job, church, work and recreational states or experiences entail! (c) Taking ANY of these pathways OUTSIDE of GOD'S WILL as revealed in SCRIPTURE before abusive people is a losing endeavor as it was in Urijah's case!

Lesson: God PROTECTS those who OBEY Him from abusers so they can CONTINUE in HIS WILL, but those who act OUTSIDE of GOD'S WILL must deal with abusive people ON THEIR OWN to their DEFEAT!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

A number of years ago, Mr. Bob Johnson, Sr. who attends the Terryville Bible Church spoke to me about a very "unfair" situation he faced in his waste removal business.

Part of Bob's business involves submitting bids to towns that need to contract out for their waste removal. On one occasion, a competitor had submitted a bid that was below Bob's bid by resorting to an unjust maneuver. Bob was bothered by it all because his business' welfare was involved, and so he approached me about it for advice. His plan was to show up at the selectman's meeting and expose the competitor's deceit even though he felt sparks might fly as a result.

I suggested otherwise. God was Bob's security, God was the One who gave him his income and business anyway, and if Bob would submit to the Lord's leading, he could attend the meeting with a gracious attitude and get the contract with his good name and Christian testimony in tact **if** the **LORD** wanted it! I suggested Bob share **only** what the **Lord** gave the opening for him to share and **when** God provided it so as to protect his demeanor and testimony. Being a good testimony by avoiding senseless disputes was **God's will** according to Philippians 2:14-15! Bob agreed to try the suggestion!

After the meeting with the selectmen, Bob called to report that he had landed the contract! Then he relayed how the Lord had stepped in to smooth out the whole matter at the meeting: his competitor was considered first by the selectmen simply because he had supplied the lower bid. However, in their proceedings, these town leaders had noticed the competitor's paperwork was not in legal order on a matter that Bob Johnson had not even considered, so they automatically disqualified the competitor and gave Bob the contract **without** Bob ever having a chance to speak! Bob was able to protect his testimony and land the contract all by trusting the Lord and watching Him deal with the unjust competitor without the risk of a painful confrontation!

When facing unfair, difficult or even abusive people, we must decide to submit every step, every thought and every motive to the Lord's will. In doing so, GOD steps in to protect HIS interests in OUR affairs so that WE can KEEP on doing HIS WILL! That is how we function skillfully in such circumstances with such people!