

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing

Part LXV: Consistently Doing God's Will In Good And Bad Circumstances

(Jeremiah 37:11-21)

I. Introduction

- A. When hard times arise in living for Christ, we are often tempted to quit or compromise our obedience to God.
- B. However, Paul told Timothy to minister "in season, out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2), to serve God **consistently** at all times. Jeremiah exemplified this action in Jeremiah 37:11-21, and we view the passage for our insight:

II. Consistently Doing God's Will In Good And Bad Circumstances, Jeremiah 37:11-21.

- A. When the Babylonian army had temporarily withdrawn from Jerusalem to fight the Egyptian army, Jeremiah tried to leave Jerusalem to conduct some business in his hometown of Anathoth in the tribal territory of Benjamin, Jeremiah 37:11-12; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1182.
- B. However, before he could exit the city gate, an official there arrested Jeremiah, charging him with trying to go over to the Babylonians, and though Jeremiah denied the charge, he was not believed, Jer. 37:13-14a. He was taken to the princes who believed the false charge against him, so in great anger they had Jeremiah beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the scribe, Jeremiah 37:14b-15.
- C. Jonathan's house was likely a vaulted cell in an underground cistern that had been converted into a dungeon prison (Ibid.), so Jeremiah was placed in the dungeon for many days, Jeremiah 37:16.
- D. King Zedekiah finally secretly summoned Jeremiah to meet him to give him any prophetic updates from the Lord about Jerusalem's future welfare, Jeremiah 37:17a. Jeremiah's lack of popularity with the people and princes led Zedekiah to host this meeting in private lest his meeting with the despised prophet politically harm him, Ibid. Thus, adding to Jeremiah's problems, he served a monarch who was weak and indecisive.
- E. Jeremiah answered the king, claiming there was such a message from God, the same one he had given back in Jeremiah 21:7: Babylon would defeat Jerusalem and Zedekiah would be captured by Babylon, Jer. 37:17b.
- F. In great boldness regardless of his prisoner status, Jeremiah asked Zedekiah what he had done to deserve punishment, for his prophecy about Babylon attacking Jerusalem had been fulfilled opposite the claims by all the false prophets to the contrary, Jeremiah 37:18-19. Jeremiah thus indicated that he was not secretly trying to undermine the Hebrews of Jerusalem by predicting Babylon's victory over them, but to get his countrymen to face their sin that they might repent that God might be merciful unto them.
- G. Jeremiah then requested that Zedekiah not return him to the prison dungeon of Jonathan the scribe lest he die there, Jeremiah 37:20. Jeremiah was about 60 years of age at the time, so confinement in the dungeon was actually dangerous to his life, so he asked for safer living conditions, Ibid., p. 1182-1183.
- H. Zedekiah then reassigned Jeremiah to the courtyard of the guard and ordered that he be fed with bread until all of the bread reserves in the city had been exhausted in the coming siege, Jeremiah 37:21.

Lesson: (1) *Though dangerously imprisoned in an underground dungeon at an elderly age, Jeremiah's MESSAGE was the SAME as it had been in EARLIER and EASIER times, that Jerusalem would fall to Babylon and Zedekiah would be captured. Jeremiah served God, so regardless what it cost him, he would not compromise his message. (2) Jeremiah also clarified his innocence as proven in his record of fulfilled prophecy opposite the errant prophecies of the false prophets. (3) Nevertheless, though unreservedly committed to holiness regardless what suffering it produced, Jeremiah sought to make the best of his circumstances by seeking better living conditions.*

Application: (1) *May we like Jeremiah rely on the Lord to be willing to risk losing ALL we have in THIS life to STICK FAITHFULLY to God's ASSIGNED CALLING and MESSAGE for us. We like the prophets of old may "lose" in the face of persecution, including losing our lives, but the reward for suffering for righteousness is great according to Matthew 5:10-12. (2) May we like Jeremiah let our lives and ministries reveal our credibility. We must not falsely boast, but proclaim our credibility when it is challenged by our track record of obedience to the Lord. (3) As in Jeremiah's case, if we face difficult circumstances, may we seek to improve them rather than succumb to spiritual defeat by getting depressed. The Apostle Paul exemplified this when he was on death row: though about to be executed, he still asked Timothy to bring his cloak so that he would not needlessly have to suffer the cold of the coming winter before he was martyred, 2 Timothy 4:6-7, 13a, 21a. Paul also asked Timothy to bring his "papyrus rolls" and "parchments," the former being rolls for writing and the latter copies of the Old Testament! (2 Timothy 4:13b; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 2 Timothy 4:13) Paul still served the Lord!*