

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing
Part LXXV: God's Personal Admonition Against Selfish Ambition
(Jeremiah 45:1-5)

I. Introduction

- A. James 3:14-15 ESV, NIV claims that "selfish ambition" is ungodly, that it is even earthly and of the devil!
- B. However, this vice can hold a believer in its grip, and a lesson on this issue is offered us in Jeremiah 45:1-5:

II. God's Personal Admonition Against Selfish Ambition, Jeremiah 45:1-5.

- A. Jeremiah 45:1 claims that Jeremiah 45:2-5 is a message God had Jeremiah give his scribe Baruch when Baruch took dictation from Jeremiah, writing his words down in a book in the fourth year of king Jehoiakim.
- B. To appreciate God's Jeremiah 45:2-5 message to Baruch, we review that dictation event in Jeremiah 36:1-32:
 - 1. God had told Jeremiah to write in a scroll all the words He had spoken against Israel, Judah and the Gentile nations of judgment going back to the reign of Jehoiakim's father, good king Josiah, Jer. 36:1-2.
 - 2. The Lord had hoped that the reading of these words might cause the people and king of Jehoiakim's era to respond as Josiah had responded, by repenting at the finding and reading of the book of the Law in the temple, that God might bless and not judge the nation, Jeremiah 36:3 with 2 Kings 22:1-23:25.
 - 3. Since Jeremiah was then restricted from going to the Temple possibly due to negative reactions to his messages of judgment (Jeremiah 7, 26; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Jer. 36:5), he had his scribe Baruch write down the words by dictation from his mouth and go and read the scroll in the Temple on a fast day when all the people were in attendance, Jeremiah 36:4-8.
 - 4. When Baruch heeded Jeremiah's command, news of the scroll's message concerned some of the officials who heard them, and they arranged for him to hide from king Jehoiakim in case he rejected the scroll's words while they took the scroll to have it read before the king, Jeremiah 36:9-19.
 - 5. King Jehoiakim responded negatively to the reading of the scroll in his presence: against the request of some of the officials present, he cut each leaf that had been read as it was read and burned it in the winter fire he had in the room to keep himself warm, Jeremiah 36:20-25.
 - 6. Jehoiakim then commanded that Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet be arrested that he presumably might punish them, but the Lord had hidden them for their safety, Jeremiah 36:26.
 - 7. God then directed Jeremiah to take another scroll and write the same words he had written in the first scroll Jehoiakim had destroyed, and to add many other similar words of judgment to them, Jer. 36:27-32. Jeremiah was to tell king Jehoiakim that he would have no descendants to sit on David's throne, and that his dead body would be dishonorably exposed to the elements rather than even being buried, Jer. 36:30-31.
 - 8. Jeremiah then directed his scribe Baruch to write the second book by dictation from his mouth, Jer. 36:32.
- C. This harrowing series of events that threatened not only Jeremiah, but also Baruch upset Baruch's personal plans in life, for heeding Jeremiah had led him to become an outlaw to the king's court!
- D. Thus, God's message to Baruch at this time as recorded in Jeremiah 45:2-5 countered his selfish ambition:
 - 1. The Lord noted that Baruch had complained in the incident of becoming outlawed by king Jehoiakim that God had added sorrow to his pain, that he was wearied with his groaning, finding no rest, Jer. 45:2-3.
 - 2. Accordingly, God responded to Baruch's complaint by explaining that He was in the process of breaking down all He had built up in Judah and Jerusalem, that what He had planted by way of Judah's institutions He was plucking up, and that of the whole land of Judah, Jeremiah 45:4.
 - 3. For Baruch to seek great things for himself when God was about to break down all He had instituted in Judah, to practice selfish ambition in a doomed society, was not only sin, but foolishness since such fame would become nonexistent when Judah was in ruins! He was not to seek great things for himself, v. 5a.
 - 4. Rather, he was to be grateful to the Lord that He would give him as booty his life, that he would not be slain wherever he went, Jer. 45:5b. This promise would later apply to his safety even when he was forcibly taken by the exiles of Judah into Egypt that would also be invaded by Babylon! (Jer. 43:1-44:30)
- E. God's calling was the only sensible one for Baruch to heed, for achieving any selfish goal would be undone by the Babylonian invasion that would destroy Judah! Only what Baruch did for God would be of lasting value!

Lesson: Regardless of the cost, Baruch was to reject vain selfish ambition to do God's eternally invaluable will.

Application: Regardless of the cost, may we reject vain selfish ambition to do God's eternally invaluable calling!