

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing
Part XCIV: The Limit Of God's Patience For Zedekiah
(Jeremiah 52:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. Scripture teaches that the Lord is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and believe in Christ for salvation, 2 Peter 3:9.
- B. However, there is a **limit** to God's patience, what should motivate even us as Christians to repent sooner than later, the lesson of Jeremiah 52:1-11 on the end of God's patience for Judah's king Zedekiah (as follows):

II. The Limit Of God's Patience For Zedekiah, Jeremiah 52:1-11.

- A. Jeremiah 52:1-2 summarily clarifies that Judah's last king Zedekiah did that which was evil in God's view just like his father king Jehoiakim had done.
- B. The next verse, Jeremiah 52:3, claims it was due to the Lord's anger that Jerusalem fell to Babylon as described in Jeremiah 52:4-11, but the background of previous chapters in the book of Jeremiah reveals that God had repeatedly sought to get Zedekiah to obey Him that he might enjoy God's blessing (as follows):
 - 1. Back in Jeremiah 21:1-14, God through Jeremiah had told Zedekiah and Jerusalem's people to surrender to the Babylonians when they arrived to besiege Jerusalem that they might live in relative blessing, but that refusing to surrender would lead to their being forcibly captured and the city burned with fire.
 - 2. In Jeremiah 34:1-7, Jeremiah had told Zedekiah that he himself would not escape captivity when the Babylonians came against Jerusalem. However, when the Babylonians had temporarily withdrawn to fight an advancing Egyptian army, the people lost their respect for and ceased obeying the Lord relative to not releasing their slaves from slavery in accord with the Law, so Jeremiah had predicted they would be handed over to their Babylonian foes in the end, Jeremiah 34:8-22.
 - 3. In Jeremiah 38:1-28, Jeremiah had once again urged Zedekiah to surrender to the Babylonians that he might enjoy some blessing versus refusing to do so and suffering forced captivity and the burning down of Jerusalem. Zedekiah had replied that he was afraid that the Jews already in Babylonian Captivity would mistreat him if he surrendered, but Jeremiah promised that no harm would come to him if he surrendered.
- C. After wavering between the choice to surrender versus trying to flee from the Babylonians, Jeremiah 52:4-11 describes how Zedekiah had decided to disobey the word of the Lord through Jeremiah and not surrender, but flee from the invading Babylonians, and the result was Zedekiah's very bad fate (as follows):
 - 1. When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:4-5) and there was no more food for the people in the city, the Babylonians broke through Jerusalem's city wall, Jeremiah 52:6-7a ESV.
 - 2. However, Zedekiah and his men of war decided to flee by night through a gate by the king's garden, going towards the lowland of Jericho, Jeremiah 52:7b. They were evidently trying to flee over to the Ammonites for asylum as the Ammonites were also then in rebellion against the Babylonian king.
 - 3. Nevertheless, the Babylonians captured Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, and his army was scattered from him as they fled for their lives, Jeremiah 52:8.
 - 4. The Babylonian army took Zedekiah up north to Riblah in the land of Hamath where Nebuchadnezzar had his field headquarters and there he passed judgment on Zedekiah, Jer. 52:9. Nebuchadnezzar killed Zedekiah's sons and officials before his eyes, then put out his eyes, permanently blinding him, and bound him with chains and carried him to Babylon where he was imprisoned until his death, Jeremiah 52:10-11.
- D. Accordingly, though God had repeatedly told Zedekiah to obey the word of the Lord through Jeremiah to surrender to Babylon for blessing, he chose to disobey that command in unbelief, consequently suffering the tragic loss of his sons, officials, eyesight and liberty to live outside of a prison for the rest of his life. The Lord had been longsuffering toward Zedekiah, but even God had an end to His patience with Judah's king!

Lesson: *Though God graciously repeatedly tried to get Judah's king Zedekiah to obey His call to surrender to the Babylonians for relative blessing, his failure to trust God's Word and try to escape from Babylon by his own means led to a loss of blessing in every way. He learned the hard way that there was an end to God's patience.*

Application: *(1) If the Lord directs us to obey Him in some realm, and we waver indecisively over heeding Him, we are living in danger, for there is an end to God's patience, an end that contains painful discipline. (2) We thus best repent, confess our sin and turn from it as soon as possible that we escape God's discipline and enjoy His blessing!*