

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH

XII. Jeremiah's Ministry Faithfulness Amid His King's Opposition (Jeremiah 36:1-32)

I. Introduction

- A. God called Jeremiah to prophesy in Judah during its apostasy until God's judgment fell on the nation.
- B. Jeremiah's ministry is then similar to what God's servants face in our era of spiritual decline. Such a calling can be marked by political opposition that seeks to cause God's servants to cease being able to do His work.
- C. Jeremiah 36:1-32 reports of Jeremiah's faithfulness to his divine calling in the face of his king's opposition to Jeremiah's ministry. This passage offers a lesson for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Jeremiah's Ministry Faithfulness Amid His King's Opposition, Jeremiah 36:1-32.

- A. Due to opposition to Jeremiah's previous prophetic messages delivered in the temple back in Jeremiah 7 and 26, in Jeremiah 36:5, he was restricted from entering the temple (Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Jer. 36:5).
- B. Thus, the Lord had Jeremiah write in a scroll all the words He had spoken to Jeremiah against Israel, Judah, and the Gentile nations from the day he began his ministry under king Josiah until the rule of Josiah's son, Jehoiakim, Jer. 36:1-2. The Lord hoped that the reading of this scroll might lead the people of Judah to fear God's impending punishment that they might turn from their evil ways so God might forgive them, Jer. 36:3.
- C. The cause for this plan from the Lord was that in Josiah's reign, the finding of the scroll of the Mosaic Law in the temple and its mere reading in the hearing of Josiah had led to Josiah's wholehearted repentance and his leading Judah to spiritual reforms, cf. 2 Kings 22:1-23:27. Accordingly, God hoped that Josiah's son Jehoiakim like his good father might respond to the reading of Jeremiah's scroll and repent like his father.
- D. Jeremiah thus dictated the information to his scribe Baruch who wrote Jeremiah's words in a scroll, and Jeremiah sent Baruch to the temple to read the scroll's contents in the hearing of the people on a fast day when a crowd would have gathered at the temple for worship, Jeremiah 36:4-10.
- E. Michaiah, a grandson of the scribe Shaphan who had read the scroll of the Mosaic Law to king Jehoiakim's father king Josiah, heard Baruch's reading of Jeremiah's words, and this same Michaiah reported the contents of the scroll to the princes in the king's palace (Jeremiah 36:11-13), and the princes summoned Baruch to come and read the scroll's contents to them, Jeremiah 36:14-15a.
- F. When Baruch had read the scroll to the princes, they were afraid of God's impending punishment and said that they would report the scroll's contents to king Jehoiakim, Jeremiah 36:15b-18. However, the princes doubted that king Jehoiakim might respond positively to the scroll's message, so they directed Baruch to go and along with Jeremiah to hide themselves, telling no one where they were hiding, Jeremiah 36:19.
- G. When Jehoiakim was informed of the scroll, he sent for it to have it read to him, Jeremiah 36:20-21.
- H. However, when the scroll was being read before Jehoiakim who sat in front of a firepot to keep warm in the winter, he took a knife and cut off several leaves as it was being read and cast them into the firepot until the entire scroll had been destroyed, Jer. 36:22-23. Neither Jehoiakim nor his servants who heard the words of the scroll were afraid of its message, nor did they tear their garments as a sign in their culture of remorse as had good king Josiah before them (cf. 2 Kings 22:11). Even when several officials interceded with king Jehoiakim not to burn the scroll, he refused to listen to them, but he destroyed the entire scroll, Jeremiah 36:24-25.
- I. Indeed, king Jehoiakim was angry enough at the scroll's contents that he ordered some officials to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah, but the officials were unable to find them, for the Lord had hidden them, Jer. 36:26.
- J. Nevertheless, the Lord then told Jeremiah to take another scroll and write in it all the former words that had been written in the first scroll that king Jehoiakim had burned, and to tell Jehoiakim that Babylon's king would surely come and destroy the kingdom of Judah, that Jehoiakim would have no descendant to sit on the throne of David, and that his dead body would not even be buried, but left exposed to the elements, v. 27-31.
- K. Jeremiah obeyed the Lord, dictating its contents to Baruch the second time, adding many more similar words to them, Jeremiah 36:32. Jeremiah stayed faithful to his calling though his ministry was rejected by the king.

Lesson: *Jeremiah gave God's word of warning to Judah's king Jehoiakim, and regardless if Jehoiakim did not repent as had his father king Josiah to where Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch had to hide from Jehoiakim, God's prophet remained faithful in his calling, continuing to give God's Word of warning and divine punishment for sin.*

Application: *(1) May we like Jeremiah remain faithful to our calling even if high government officials oppose it!
(2) If our ministry is thus opposed, we should take protective measures like Jeremiah to avoid needless persecution.*