

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing Part LXVI: God's Help To His Consistently Obedient Servant (Jeremiah 38:1-28)

I. Introduction

- A. Sometimes God's servants need help, but there is no human help that is motivated or available to help them.
- B. The prophet Jeremiah faced and overcame this challenge in Jeremiah 38:1-28, and we view it for our insight:

II. God's Help To His Consistently Obedient Servant, Jeremiah 38:1-28.

- A. Jeremiah experienced a life-threatening trial where he could not help himself or get any help, Jeremiah 38:1-6:
 - 1. Several officials heard his prophecy that those who stayed in Jerusalem would die by the sword, by hunger and by disease, but that those left the city to surrender to the Babylonian army would live, Jer. 38:1-3.
 - 2. Thinking that Jeremiah was being a traitor to Judah by preaching this message, they asked king Zedekiah that Jeremiah be slain, that he was demoralizing the people who still remained in the city, Jeremiah 38:4.
 - 3. Typically weak Zedekiah gave the officials permission, saying he could not oppose them, Jeremiah 38:5.
 - 4. The officials then arrested Jeremiah and put him into Malchiah's cistern (Jeremiah 38:6), "a large pit cut into rock and covered with plaster . . . used to gather rainwater in the winter for use during the dry summer," Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1183. There had been a prolonged drought, so there was only mire in the cistern, so when they lowered Jeremiah into this deep pit with ropes, he sank down into the thick mire, his life threatened as "death by starvation was a near prospect," Ibid.
- B. However, back when God had called Jeremiah into the prophetic ministry, the Lord had promised that though all the people of Judah would fight against Jeremiah, God was with him to deliver him, Jeremiah 1:18-19.
- C. God thus moved a Gentile slave, a Cushite, to come to Jeremiah's rescue, Jeremiah 38:7-13; Ibid.:
 - 1. When Ebed-melech, a Gentile Cushite and servant of Zedekiah heard of Jeremiah's plight, he went to the king to complain that the officials had mistreated Jeremiah, that the prophet would die of hunger in the cistern since there was no more bread left among the people of the city, Jeremiah 38:7-9.
 - 2. The vacillating Zedekiah heeded Ebed-melech's request, commanding him to take thirty men with him to pull Jeremiah up out of the cistern that he not die there, Jeremiah 38:10.
 - 3. Ebed-melech then took ropes and old rags with thirty men to pull Jeremiah up out of the cistern, Jer. 38:11. He lowered two sets of looped ropes to Jeremiah to position them under his armpits, shielding his armpits from them with cushioning rags over the ropes, and they drew him up out of the cistern so that Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison, Jeremiah 38:12-13.
- D. King Zedekiah then arranged for a second secret meeting with Jeremiah at the third entrance to the temple (Jeremiah 38:14a) to ask Jeremiah insight from the Lord, that he not hide it from him, Jeremiah 38:14b.
- E. Jeremiah by now distrusted Zedekiah, so he asked that if he told the king God's message for him, would the king not put him to death, and if he gave the king counsel, would he not listen to him, Jeremiah 38:15.
- F. Zedekiah then swore an oath in God's name Who had made their souls that he would not put Jeremiah to death nor hand him over to the officials that sought his life, Jeremiah 38:16.
- G. Jeremiah thus gave the king the same message he had repeatedly given: if Zedekiah surrendered to Babylon's officials, he and his house would live and Jerusalem would not be burned. If he refused to surrender, the city would fall, the Babylonians would burn it down and Zedekiah would be captured, Jeremiah 38:17-18.
- H. Zedekiah replied that he feared the captured Jews in Babylon would mistreat him if he surrendered, but Jeremiah answered that were the king to obey the Lord, he would live and all would be well with him, v. 19-20. However, were Zedekiah to disobey God, his own harem would scoff at him for letting himself be misled by his officials, he would have lost all his friends and the city would be destroyed by fire, Jeremiah 38:21-23.
- I. Zedekiah then told Jeremiah to tell the officials who might learn that he had met with the king that he had asked the king not to return him to Jonathan's house that he not die without mentioning the message from God that Jeremiah told him, v. 24-26. The officials did question Jeremiah, and when he gave them the king's suggested answer, they left him alone, so Jeremiah stayed in the court of the prison until the city fell, v. 27-28.

Lesson: *When Jeremiah faced certain death and only God could rescue him, since he consistently heeded the Lord, God kept His promise to deliver him by the unlikely use of a concerned, foreign slave and a vacillating king.*

Application: *May we consistently heed the Lord and see Him help us in times of great need fulfill His will for us.*