

A CHARACTER STUDY OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

Lesson 9

THE PRAYER OF THE REMNANT OF JUDAH

“And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:) That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.”

Jeremiah 42:2-3

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THE PRAYER OF JEREMIAH

“The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day.”

Jeremiah 42:19

Jerusalem has fallen. Babylon has conquered the people of God. The remnant of the people that were left when King Nebuchadrezzar returned to Babylon gathered in Mizpah of Judah. Before he left, he had placed Gedaliah as the governor of Judah and the remnant people of Judah are gathering around him for safety. Ishmael, an agent of Baalis, king of the Ammonites, attacked the Jews in Mizpah and murdered Gedaliah and all the Jews that were with him. Ishmael is then challenged by rebel leader, Johanan. *“But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, Then they took all the men, and went to fight with*

Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon.” (Jer. 41:11-12) Ishmael escapes with his life and flees to the Ammonites. The remaining people of Judah are rescued by Johanan and gather to him. “Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, even mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon:” (Jer. 41:16)

This group of Jews that are left in Judah, had a problem and a decision to make. What should they do? Should they stay where they are and risk being attacked by the Babylonians? They were afraid, because of the killing of Gedaliah. Or, should they flee to Egypt and seek sanctuary there. The way they dealt with this problem is instructive to the New Testament believer today.

The leadership of the remaining people in Judah decided that they should ask the

God of Heaven for direction and wisdom. Many expositors believe that this remnant had already determined to proceed on to Egypt and simply wanted Yahweh's to agree with them. Others, see the seeming sincerity in the request and think that perhaps the people were very confused and really did want the direction of the Lord. A likely explanation would be that they were thinking that there was really only one correct thing to do. They were hoping that the Lord would tell them to do what they were planning to do all along, to go to Egypt to seek safety. They go to Jeremiah, the prophet, and ask him to pray for them. Their prayer is stated in Jeremiah 42:2-3. *“Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:) That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.”* Jeremiah accepts the request to pray but makes them promise that they will abide by what God tells them

to do. They promised, *“Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.”* (Jer. 42:6) Jeremiah began to pray. Ten days later the Lord answered. Perhaps He delayed His answer to see if the people would be patient and wait for the answer from the Lord before they moved on their own. Jeremiah’s answer from the Lord told them to stay there in the land. In scripture Egypt is a picture of the world. By going to Egypt, they were seeking a worldly answer to their problem. God wanted them to rely on Him, in faith for their protection. The truth is, the people really wanted to go to Egypt. It was the only action that seemed reasonable to them. God sent them a solemn warning. If they left their home and went to Egypt, they would die in the same manner that they feared in Judah. *“But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God, Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear*

the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die.” (Jer. 42:13-16) Jeremiah recounts in chapter 44 that the people did, indeed die at the hands of the Babylonians in Egypt. God through His prophet promised, *“Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by*

the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.” (Jeremiah 44:11-14)

The lesson to the modern believer is that when we seek to follow a worldly answer to our problems and do not follow God’s direction, we do not solve our problems but only take our problems with us. Many times, a believer will leave a church and go to another church seeking to escape from a problem. Because they have not properly dealt with their problem, they soon find that same problem at the new church. “The very evils we think to escape by sin, we bring on ourselves thereby. What our hearts

are most set on often proves fatal to us. Those who think to escape troubles by changing their place will find them wherever they go (Ezek. 11:8)." (Constable. P.342)

When Jeremiah delivered the Lord's answer, the proud men who lead the people, argued with him. They rebuked him saying that the Lord had not spoken to him. They even accused him of taking advice from his servant, Baruch and not the Lord. When people do not want to obey the Lord, they will often resort to the most ridiculous reasons not to obey. The tragedy is that despite God's warning, Johanan took all the people to Egypt. Jeremiah even went with them. They probably compelled Jeremiah to go with them. It might be that he chose to go with the people he loved. "It was at this place that, according to St. Jerome, tradition says the faithful Jeremiah was stoned to death by these rebellious wretches; for whose welfare he had watched, prayed, gone through many indignities, and suffered every kind of hardship. And now he sealed

the truth of his Divine mission with his blood.” (Guzik. Quoting Clark on Vs 43:7)

Chapter 44 record the final words of the faithful prophet of God, Jeremiah. He ended his life and ministry faithfully telling his people the truth of God. They had already decided to stray from his teachings and embrace the false God’s of Egypt. Yet, Jeremiah remained true to the Father. History tells us that the Jews spread all through the land of Egypt. Babylon attacked and conquered Egypt. Many of the unfaithful Jews died. *“All the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.”* (Jer. 44:27) As a sign to them, God destroyed the Egyptian king as he had the Jewish king. *“And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into*

the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.” (Vs. 29-30)

God always intends the best for His people. When we obey His leading His blessings follow. When we strike out on their own way, there is always sorrow.

NOTES

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