



The **Fiery** Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

Text

Jeremiah 52:1-34

Topic

The last thing Zedekiah sees before he is blinded is the murder of his sons by their Babylonian captors

Title

"Don't It Make My Blind Eyes Blue"

Introduction

One of the most inspiring quotes to come out of World War Two was Winston Churchill's promise, "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; **we shall never surrender.**"

More recently, "**Never give up; never surrender!**" was the creed of Captain Taggart, commander of the NSEA *Protector*. It inspired his crew and the Thermians to defeat the evil warlord Sarris as he sought to invade the earth back in 1999.

It's all chronicled in the film, *Galaxy Quest*.

Whether in fact or fiction, we don't think too highly of surrendering. It smacks of defeat.

Yet we robustly sing, "I surrender all," as if it's the easiest thing in the world to surrender everything to God.

It's not, although it is necessary. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, I know you want to surrender more-and-more until you surrender all.

Surrender plays a big part in the last chapter of Jeremiah. Two of Judah's kings are brought before us - Zedekiah and Jehoiachin. One of them heeded Jeremiah's counsel from The Lord to surrender to Babylon; the other did not.

For those kings, in that moment, surrendering to Babylon was surrendering to God. That was His will for them.

One ran from surrender; the other walked in surrender. You can guess already that the one who ran paid the price. The one who walked in surrender - well, it wasn't easy, but it was necessary, and in the end it brought God's blessing upon him.

We are going to talk about our own surrendering to God. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Run From Surrender To God And You Will Be Subjugated, and #2 Walk In Surrender To God And You Will Be Sustained.

#1 Run From Surrender To God And You Will Be Subjugated

(v1-30)

Jeremiah had encouraged the nation of Judah to repent from her many sins. His ministry spanned some forty years.

God had been trying to reach His wayward people for several hundred years prior to Jeremiah.

They refused to repent and turn back to God from idols so He determined to discipline them by making them subject to the nation of Babylon.

Jeremiah urged the Jews to surrender to Babylon:

Jeremiah 21:9 (NIV) Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live; they will escape with their lives.

Zedekiah was not rightfully a king of Judah. He was an appointed governor. He was ruling at the time of the final siege against Jerusalem, refusing to surrender. To make matters worse, he ran, trying to escape the Babylonians. But as we've said, he was really running from surrendering to God.

Jeremiah 52:1 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

Jeremiah 52:2 He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

Jeremiah 52:3 For because of the anger of the LORD this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, till He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Yes, The Lord was angry - at their sin. At their worst they were sacrificing infants to Molech in strange and perverted idol worship. God determined that it would require a time of captivity away from their land to turn their hearts back to Him.

Zedekiah refused to surrender. He tried instead to escape.

Jeremiah 52:4 Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around.

Jeremiah 52:5 So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

Jeremiah 52:6 By the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.

We studied Jeremiah's other book, Lamentations, on Wednesday nights. The siege of Jerusalem was brutal. To give you an example: The people resorted to necro-cannibalism.

They didn't have to go through that siege; they should have surrendered. It shows us how hard it can be to surrender - how much against our nature it is.

Jeremiah 52:7 Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war fled and went out of the city at night by way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden, even though the Chaldeans were near the city all around. And they went by way of the plain.

Jeremiah 52:8 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him.

Jeremiah 52:9 So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he pronounced judgment on him.

Jeremiah 52:10 Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. And he killed all the princes of Judah in Riblah.

Jeremiah 52:11 He also put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in bronze fetters, took him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

First he was *bereft* of his loved ones; then he was *blinded*; then he was *bound* for the rest of his life.

Subjugate means *to bring under dominion or control*. It's a very simple illustration, really. If you run from surrendering to God, thinking you are going to be free, you end up being brought under the dominion of other forces. Emotionally bereft, spiritually blinded, physically bound - you will be a prisoner.

Hold that thought for a while, because we need to read a large chunk of chapter chronicling the details of the fall of Jerusalem.

While I read it, answer this question: Why go into so much detail?

Jeremiah 52:12 Now in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month (which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 52:13 He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire.

Jeremiah 52:14 And all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down all the walls of Jerusalem all around.

Jeremiah 52:15 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive some of the poor people, the rest of the people who remained in the city, the defectors who had deserted to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the craftsmen.

Jeremiah 52:16 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left some of the poor of the land as vinedressers and farmers.

Jeremiah 52:17 The bronze pillars that were in the house of the LORD, and the carts and the bronze Sea that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried all their bronze to Babylon.

Jeremiah 52:18 They also took away the pots, the shovels, the trimmers, the bowls, the spoons, and all the bronze utensils with which the priests ministered.

Jeremiah 52:19 The basins, the firepans, the bowls, the pots, the lampstands, the spoons, and the cups, whatever was solid gold and whatever was solid silver, the captain of the guard took away.

Jeremiah 52:20 The two pillars, one Sea, the twelve bronze bulls which were under it, and the carts, which King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD the bronze of all these articles was beyond measure.

Jeremiah 52:21 Now concerning the pillars: the height of one pillar was eighteen cubits, a measuring line of twelve cubits could measure its circumference, and its thickness was four fingers; it was hollow.

Jeremiah 52:22 A capital of bronze was on it; and the height of one capital was five cubits, with a network and pomegranates all around the capital, all of bronze. The second pillar, with pomegranates was the same.

Jeremiah 52:23 There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides; all the pomegranates, all around on the network, were one hundred.

Jeremiah 52:24 The captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest, and the three doorkeepers.

Jeremiah 52:25 He also took out of the city an officer who had charge of the men of war, seven men of the king's close associates who were found in the city, the principal scribe of the army who mustered the people of the land, and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the midst of the city.

Jeremiah 52:26 And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took these and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

Jeremiah 52:27 Then the king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive from its own land.

Jeremiah 52:28 These are the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year, three thousand and twenty-three Jews;

Jeremiah 52:29 in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred and thirty-two persons;

Jeremiah 52:30 in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred and forty-five persons. All the persons were four thousand six hundred.

By the way, Jeremiah did not write chapter fifty-two. Chapter fifty-one, you might remember, ended saying, "thus far are the words of Jeremiah."

This chapter was written under inspiration by an unknown person; I say he was an historian due to the analytical quality and precision of the words.

So, why so much detail - especially about the articles and implements of worship?

Because God had also promised that He would return His people to their land and reinstitute their worship. In the midst of all the destruction God saved a remnant who would return, and the things they would need when they returned.

The book doesn't have a happy ending, but it does have a hopeful ending. "And they all lived hopefully ever after."

Back, now, to Zedekiah, bereft, blinded and bound, rotting away in prison for the rest of his life. That is how I must appear to God in those areas of my life I refuse to surrender to Him. He has grace for me to be conformed into the image of Jesus but I run away pursuing my own course.

I might end up literally subjugated. Plenty of backsliders have found themselves bereft of family, blinded or otherwise physically debilitated, and bound by addiction or prison.

I'm not talking about some small, secret, unknown corner of my heart that has yet to be submitted to Christ's Lordship. I'm talking about us, as believers, rejecting God's clear commands, directives, and boundaries. I'm talking about willfully sinning and thinking God won't do anything about it because I'm His child.

I'm talking about things like unbiblical divorce, fornication, adultery, and covetousness.

Don't allow sin to destroy you. Surrender to God in all those areas by simply submitting to His will as revealed by His Word.

Why don't we surrender? It isn't easy to walk with God in surrender. As we close out the chapter, as we look at Jehoiachin, we'll see that walking in surrender was no walk in the park.

#2 Walk In Surrender To God And You Will Be Sustained

(v31-34)

Chronologically, Jehoiachin preceded Zedekiah. He was only eighteen years old when he became king of Judah, and he only reigned for 100 days. He was the last direct heir of David to sit on the throne, and the last true king before the future return of Jesus Christ as King in His Second Coming.

He's also called Jeconiah and Coniah in other passages.

Jehoiachin heeded God's Word and surrendered to Babylon. At first, there doesn't seem to be too much difference between the results. He, too, was imprisoned. But his imprisonment and subsequent treatment was very different than Zedekiah's.

Jeremiah 52:31 Now it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah and brought him out of prison.

Thanks a lot, God. I surrendered as you asked and spent the next thirty-seven years in prison. What good did it do me to surrender to You?

I don't mean to sound callous, but if you are Jehoiachin, your kids weren't slaughtered before your eyes; you weren't immediately blinded; and it doesn't seem you were bound all the time.

I'm not saying prison was a cake walk... But those were the times. In which you lived. Your nation had sinned and was subject to God's discipline.

It was a best-case scenario for a subdued king; normally they'd be brutalized then murdered.

Let me be direct. If your marriage is less than ideal, it is no excuse to refuse to surrender; it's not a reason to run. No; stay and walk with God.

You say you feel trapped? Feels like being in prison? Those are God's walls and bars. He wants you to experience His grace right there.

What if you're not happy? It should give you great joy to obey God! If you find no joy in simple obedience to God, I suggest **that** is the heart of your problem. **You** are the problem - your walk with God - *not* your spouse or any body else.

Apply the same spiritual mindset to other areas of obedience.

Look to Jesus. He surrendered Himself completely to the will of the Father by coming as a man, laying aside His prerogatives of deity, and offering His life as a sacrifice for mankind.

Every descendant of Adam benefits from the work accomplished by Jesus on the Cross, and especially you who believe in Him as Savior.

Jesus isn't asking you to do anything He hasn't done in greater measure.

Besides, Jehoiachin's incarceration wasn't the whole story of His life.

Jeremiah 52:32 And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon.

Jeremiah 52:33 So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life.

Jeremiah 52:34 And as for his provisions, there was a regular ration given him by the king of Babylon, a portion for each day until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

A change in administration in Babylon brought a sudden and unexpected change to Jehoiachin. Suddenly he was elevated, exalted, treated like a king again. He enjoyed a blessed retirement.

His name, by the way, has been discovered by archaeologists on cuneiform tablets in excavations in Babylon.

This doesn't mean everyone who suffers a little will be released from it to coast through life. But even if suffering is your constant lot in this life, one day you will sit with the King of kings around His banqueting table; and you'll do it for eternity.

Surrendering is not a defeat; it is your only means for spiritual victory. It was how Jesus conquered sin and death and the devil; and it's how we are more than conquerors through life's meager ups and mostly downs.

You only have two paths. You can be Zedekiah and run; or you can be Jehoiachin and surrender.

In either case you're going to spend some time on earth in less than desirable circumstances.

But as a Jehoiachin it won't matter because Jesus will be there with you, sustaining you, through both buffetings and blessings, until you awake in His likeness and look full in His wonderful face.