

[jeremiah]

:: jeremiah 32.1-15 ::

We're taking a look at a few examples of God's people being imprisoned, seeing what happened, what God said to them and how He worked through their lives and those circumstances.

This morning we're going to spend some time in Jeremiah 32, verses 1 through 15. We'll have to move quickly, but that's alright.

Jeremiah, of course, was a priest and prophet of Israel. He carried a particularly not-well-received message from God to his countrymen about the coming judgment of God in the form of Babylonian Captivity. The people had failed to obey the Lord's commandments, and because of their specific disregard for observing Sabbath years, they would have to spend 70 years away from the land before being returned.

During the course of his life and ministry, Jeremiah was imprisoned a couple of times. There are several notable stories we get from his time behind bars. The most famous is when Jeremiah was lowered deep into a miry dungeon, where he sank into the mud and later was lifted out.

This morning we take a look at a different jail term. One spent in the court of the prison.

We're going to discover 3 attributes of Jeremiah that are part and parcel with living the Christian life today, things that we can evaluate in our own hearts and see where we stand.

Let's see what this was all about in the first 5 verses of chapter 32:

Jeremiah 32.1-5 - The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord— in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, "Why do you prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape from the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face, and see him eye to eye; then he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall be until I visit him," says the Lord; "though you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed"?"

Jeremiah was thrown into prison for preaching the word of God. Like all prophets, he was sent with various messages to the people of Israel. In a time of great apostasy and coming judgment, his messages were not well-received.

It is crucial that we understand the importance of preaching. Not just behind a pulpit, but each one of us preaching one on one, person to person. Jeremiah was uniquely chosen by God for his time and place, but you and I have that same calling on our lives as well.

2 Timothy 4.1-2 - I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

Another text gives us a different perspective on this:

Romans 10.14 - How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Preaching is not a vocation that just a few Christians are called to. We need to get rid of that idea. Preaching is something that all of us *must* do. We are placed in a specific time and in specific locations so *that* we can preach the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to those around us.

It's easy to shy away from preaching, especially when it's not being received or the message isn't popular. As we see in this text and as we read about in the news each week, the message of the Gospel isn't always something that gains you popularity, but it is the only hope that the lost and dying world has. And we must not change the message so that it's more palatable or entertaining for the people around us. That's what the king wanted Jeremiah to do. We're to preach the word as it has been given to us, even though the world isn't excited about it.

God is with us to spread the Gospel. He gives us His word and His Spirit so that we can communicate to the people He brings into our path. But we need to understand that God is bringing people and situations and circumstances into our lives *SO THAT* we will preach to them. We have to fight the urge to shy away from sharing our faith. We have to take up the call to share God's word because every day God is purposely giving us opportunities to preach, just like Noah did and Stephen did and Jeremiah did and all the others did.

The second attribute we see in this prisoner of Lord is **redeeming**. Verses 6 through 9.

Jeremiah 32.6-9 - And Jeremiah said, "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you, saying, "Buy my field which is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. "' Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the Lord, and said to me, 'Please buy my field that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord. So I bought the field from Hanamel, the son of my uncle who was in Anathoth, and weighed out to him the money—seventeen shekels of silver.

This is a very unusual and, from the human perspective, illogical thing that God is asking Jeremiah to do. He's in prison. God has revealed to him that Babylon *will* conquer Jerusalem and the Jews were going to be carried off for 70 years. But here, God is giving Jeremiah this

chance to redeem this field, because of the future plans the Lord had for His people. It was a symbol that one day they *would* return to their promised land and that God would be faithful to restore what was lost and new life and work would continue.

In the New Testament context, it reminds us of this passage in Ephesians 5:

Ephesians 5.15-16 - See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

As Christians, we're invited to take stock of our lives and our activities and use them to redeem the time. Meaning, we're to focus on how our lives can impact eternity. We're called to invest in God's future Kingdom right now.

Of course, to the natural man and the world around us this isn't logical. Because Biblical Christianity commands us to crucify self and all that entails so that we can glorify God and build up His Kingdom. The focus of our lives is not to be building up wealth for ourselves, or obsessing over material possessions or gaining power or comfort or security. The focus of our lives is to be the future that God has laid out for us in the Bible. Like Jeremiah, we should be investing in the plan of God, even when it doesn't seem immediately profitable to the human mindset. Like Jeremiah, it is our choice whether we will participate in the privilege of redeeming our time now for the heavenly future or whether we're going to focus our lives on present comfort and security and pleasures.

Preaching, redeeming and now in verses 10 through 15, testifying.

Jeremiah 32.10-15 - And I signed the deed and sealed it, took witnesses, and weighed the money on the scales. So I took the purchase deed, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open; and I gave the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses who signed the purchase deed, before all the Jews who sat in the court of the prison.

"Then I charged Baruch before them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is sealed and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days." For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land." ' "

No detail of this purchase went unnoticed because Jeremiah wanted everyone to see that he actually believed in what God was saying. The things he had been preaching about weren't just hypotheticals to him, but they were to be carried out. There was a great group of witnesses who saw this strange situation being played out as Jeremiah actually met his faith with action, even while imprisoned.

We know from the following verses that he wasn't this perfect person with no doubts whatsoever. In fact, in the next 10 verses Jeremiah opens up his prayer journal and shares about how he privately asked the Lord whether he was really doing the right thing or not.

But when push came to shove, when God asked him to do something, he actually lived the way he said he believed, and all the people around him saw this testimony of a life governed by God and supplied by God. They saw the testimony of a Believer who preferred the things of heaven to the things of earth. They saw the testimony of a man who was willing to represent the Lord no matter what the personal cost might be and a man who wasn't going to compromise and give up simply because things got uncomfortable. His actions were an incredible witness of the power of God, the faithfulness of God and the relationship that a person can have with God.

The situation Jeremiah found himself in and the situation we find ourselves in today are remarkably similar.

God has come and told us that there is a judgment coming on the people of earth. He's called on us to preach that message and encourage people to repent and receive salvation. While that message is not always received with open arms, God has promised to be faithful and to be with us. Along the way we're called upon to put our faith into action. Going beyond talking and into doing. Toward that end, we are to redeem the time and make decisions based upon the future Kingdom of God, investing in eternity and choosing Godliness over earthliness. And as we're faithful to actually live our lives for Jesus, to trust in Him and find our worth in Him, then the people around us will see that a life in Christ is actually different than a life without Him and it is full of confidence and hope and contentment.

Preaching, redeeming, testifying. Let's focus on those today.