

Message #44

Jeremiah 40:1-16

When you honestly and objectively look at what is happening in the United States right now, you do have to conclude this nation as we have known it seems to be going down fast. We used to be a Christian nation given to honoring God and applying God's word. But that is not the case anymore. I don't think the United States will ever again become what it once was.

When I was in elementary school back in the 1950's, a teacher was arrested because it was suspected that he was a communist. When I was in school, we stood and said the pledge of allegiance and the Bible and prayer were in the schools. Not now.

In my opinion, churches today are part of the problem. They have made God out to be an entertainment God. The word of God is no longer the primary reason most people go to church. In fact, churches are now trying to have "contemporary services" that will appease the world and make young people happy.

Years ago, Warren Wiersbe wisely observed that many scholars who have studied history have concluded "the one thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history" (*Be Decisive*, p. 173).

In Jeremiah's day that was certainly true of most of God's people. They literally saw their world fall apart. They saw God bring enemies into their land and Jerusalem and destroy it. It did not matter what God did to His people, they would not reverence Him, they would not turn to Him, they would not take His word seriously and they would not obey Him. They would not turn away from their sin. They were stubborn and rebellious even when God had chastised them.

Now the judgment they experienced came in waves. It did not hit all at once. God gave His people plenty of opportunity to realize His judgment was underway. There were three deportations out of Jerusalem before Jerusalem was destroyed. So before God gave the finale of His judgment, He gave His people opportunity to obey Him and escape judgment. Obeying Him meant surrendering to the Babylonians.

Now I think right now we are seeing things that would indicate we are nearing the finale in which God will pour out His final wrath in the Tribulation. For example, I think the Corona virus is a virus sanctioned by God and it is a statement to the world that God can send a pestilence to the world that can and will kill people. In Europe, there has been actual language used that says you cannot buy or sell if you have not had the vaccine. That is setting the stage for the Antichrist who will say you cannot buy or sell unless you worship him. I think the heat wave in the west is sending a signal that God can burn up the world and dry up the water. So all of these things indicate the clouds are forming for the Tribulation.

But here is the good prophetic news in all of this that comes straight from this chapter in Jeremiah. **God will always bless the remnant of faithful people.**

Even when God is permitting a nation to collapse, God will always bless and care for the remnant of people who love Him and His word.

That point is very clear from Jeremiah 40. What we see here is this:

GOD PROTECTED AND PRESERVED AND BLESSED THE REMNANT OF PEOPLE WHO OBEYED HIM EVEN WHEN HE WAS JUDGING THE REST OF THE PEOPLE.

I do not think the United States is going to come back to the Christian heritage that it once had. But I do believe in what Philip Ryken, in his commentary said, and that is **what the church needs today is not a marketing theology, or a growth theology, but a remnant theology** (*Jeremiah*, p. 608).

I am going to change that a bit. What the church needs today is not a marketing ecclesiology or a growth ecclesiology; **it needs a remnant ecclesiology**. What we need to be is a church that says we are going to be part of a small remnant that will stay focused on reverencing God and His word and obeying it and applying it to our lives.

As people of God, we need to purpose to stay committed to God and His word and if we do that, God will protect us and preserve us and bless us even if the rest of the world and the rest of the churches fall apart. **God always preserves and blesses the remnant of faithful people who obey His word**. That is clearly one point we must see when we go through this chapter in Jeremiah.

Now we are given some specific details in this chapter about what happened to Jeremiah and how he was set free. **Jeremiah was amazingly blessed by God in a time when God was cursing most of the rest of the people.**

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – The word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah. **40:1**

We get some good information in this chapter that we did not get in chapter 39 about Jeremiah.

Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC and in all the action, it seemed like Jeremiah was lost. This is fascinating because in this story Jeremiah is not even consulted. But faithful people of God are never lost regardless of what is happening because God is Personally looking out for His faithful individuals.

Nebuzaradan had been given the responsibility by Nebuchadnezzar to find Jeremiah and take good care of him (39:14-16; **40:1-6**). God was doing this behind the scenes. As God was destroying and chastising most of the world, He was still looking out for His faithful prophet.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – Nebuzaradan sets Jeremiah free to go wherever he wants. **40:2-4**

Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah and released him. He even gave Jeremiah the option of choosing where he wanted to go to live. He could travel to Babylon or he could stay in the land.

Just think about this. God has just permitted Zedekiah to be seriously judged and hauled as a slave to Babylon and the same God is moving to give Jeremiah the freedom option of selecting where it is he wanted to live.

It is intriguing to see from **verses 2-3** that Nebuzaradan realized that God was the One who had given them victory as a punishment for the sin of God's people. Nebuzaradan actually had a better grasp of theology than many of the people of God and he was a heathen leader.

He actually realized that it was Jeremiah's God who had brought the calamity on Jerusalem. He even knew that it was Jeremiah who had been predicting that God would bring this calamity on the people for their sin against Him.

It certainly is a shame when the lost world has a better perspective of God's truth than the people of God. So Nebuzaradan was a rare theologian here and a good one.

After he freed Jeremiah, he invited him to go to Babylon (**v. 4**). He said to Jeremiah if you want to travel to Babylon with me, he would personally look after him and take care of him. But if he didn't want to go, then he could go wherever he wanted and do whatever seems good for him to do.

Jeremiah had total freedom to decide where it was he wanted to go. Do you see what God is doing here? He is caring for one who was serious about Him and His word. When we purpose to know God's word and obey it, we can travel through life with a freedom given by God and with the protection of God.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – Jeremiah decides to go to Gedaliah. 40:5-6

Jeremiah decided he would stay with a group in Judah that was being led by Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, who had been an old friend to Jeremiah.

Now just think about this decision of Jeremiah. He could have traveled back to Babylon with Nebuzaradan as an honored prophet of God. He could have lived out many of his days in a lap of luxury honored not only by the Babylonians, but by many of the Jews in Babylon.

Had Jeremiah chosen to go to Babylon, certainly he would have been held in high esteem by Daniel and Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego. Plus other of those who are already there. But Jeremiah chose not to go to Babylon.

As Jeremiah turned away from going to Babylon, Nebuzaradan suggested that he too go to Gedaliah because he had been appointed to be governor over all the cities of Judah (**v. 5**).

The Babylonian commander gave Jeremiah a ration and gift and let him go and Jeremiah went to live where Gedaliah lived, which was Mizpah. Mizpah became a key place of government after Jerusalem had been destroyed.

Apparently Nebuchadnezzar appointed Mizpah to be the new central place of government, now that Jerusalem was burned to the ground.

You must marvel here at the sovereignty of God in protecting Jeremiah. Not only was Jeremiah spared the judgments, he was actually given freedom and support to go wherever he wanted to go and do whatever he wanted to do.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – All the commanders also go to Gedaliah. **40:7-12**

When the commanders of the military heard that they were in Mizpah and that Gedaliah had been appointed a leader by the Babylonians and that some men, women and children were there, they decided to join them.

Verse 8 says that Gedaliah was joined by Ishmael, who was the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Jonathan, were the first to join them. **Ishmael will eventually kill Gedaliah (41:1-3).**

Also joining the group were Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth; the sons of Ephai the Netophathite and, Jezaniah, the son of Maacathite. Both they and their men came.

Now when we read these names, they are pretty much meaningless to us. **But what these names show is that even when God is involved in everything happening in the world, He still knows the names of individuals and what they are doing.** God may be pouring out His judgment on the world but still tracking individuals.

According to **verse 9**, Gedaliah addressed the people. These people had lost homes and land and Jerusalem and yet Gedaliah made it clear that they had nothing to fear from the Babylonians by living there. He said if we serve the king of Babylon, things will go well for us.

Gedaliah said that he would stay in Mizpah. He told the people to gather their wine and their fruit and oil and crops and store them and live in their cities (**v. 10**). **God provides for and blesses the remnant of faithful people who love Him and obey Him and His word.**

According to verses 11-12, when news spread as to what God was doing, many wanted to go there to be part of it. People moved to Mizpah.

This is just amazing. God is blessing a remnant of people in time of judgment.

Now not everyone moving here is doing it because they are right with God. Not everyone moving here was doing this because they wanted to be faithful to God and His word. But a small remnant did.

I cannot help but think of those seven churches in Revelation and the church of Philadelphia that loved and guarded God's word and testimony for Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I'll open a door for you no one can shut and shut doors for you no one can open. God blesses the remnant."

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Johanan reports an assassination plot against Gedaliah but he does not believe it. **40:13-16**

It didn't take long for the political games to start. We don't know the motives, but Johanan learned that Baalis the king of the sons of Ammon had formed a conspiracy with Ishmael to kill Gedaliah.

Maybe they did not like the fact that he was promoting a surrender to the Babylonians and not an insurrection against the Babylonians. Perhaps he wanted the power and did not like the fact that the power was held by Gedaliah.

We don't know why Ishmael wanted to kill him, but he thought it would be a good idea to get rid of him. So Johanan went to Gedaliah to tell him of the plan and plot.

According to **verse 14**, Gedaliah did not believe it. He did not believe that Ishmael would actually kill him so he dismissed it. In fact, he said you are lying about Ishmael.

Now what Gedaliah should have done was to consult Jeremiah. But by him refusing to respond to the information God sovereignly gave him, it will cost him his life.

According to **verse 15**, Johanan wanted to kill Ishmael. He knew that if Gedaliah were killed, the Jews would scatter.

But according to **verse 16**, Gedaliah would not listen and said it was all a lie.

In any dispensation of God, He will always preserve a remnant of faithful people. He will protect them, provide for them and bless them.