

NARROW ESCAPE

Monday, October 23

Reading: Jeremiah 37-38

Jeremiah 38:20 *"Obey the LORD by doing what I tell you. Then it will go well with you, and your life will be spared.*

21 *But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the LORD has revealed to me...* **23** *"All your wives and children will be brought out to the Babylonians. You yourself will not escape from their hands but will be captured by the king of Babylon; and this city will be burned down."*

Jeremiah is around 60 years old! He had been warning the nation that Babylon's army, who were laying siege to the city, would destroy Jerusalem and the only hope was to surrender to them. However, in a turn of events, the Egyptian army moves in from the south and Nebuchadnezzar and his army leave Jerusalem to engage them. King Zedekiah and the people believe this is a deliverance from God. But Jeremiah informs them that it is merely a temporary delay and the Babylonians will return to finish the job.

During this brief time of peace, Jeremiah attempts to leave Jerusalem to take care of some business back home. However, the officer at the gate believes he is trying to desert to the Babylonians and has him arrested. Once again Jeremiah is beaten and thrown into a dungeon. Zedekiah brings the prophet to the palace hoping the message has now changed. But persecuting God's prophet does not alter God's message. From this point on, Jeremiah will remain in confinement, no longer free to move among the people.

But some of the king's princes do not consider this punishment enough. They petition to kill Jeremiah and the weak-willed king gives Jeremiah into their hands. They toss the prophet into the sewer to die in the muck. The only official who interceded for Jeremiah was a foreigner serving in the palace. His name Ebed-Melech literally means "servant of the king." He pleads for Jeremiah's life and is allowed to rescue him and return him to the courtyard of the guard. Even this narrow escape does not change the prophet's message. When he is called before Zedekiah again he still proclaims the destruction of the city if they will not obey the Lord and submit to the Babylonians.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. When we are faithful to the Lord we should expect persecution and scorn. Jesus promised, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). How do you respond when rejected or mocked for your faith? How do Jesus' words bring comfort during those times?
2. King Zedekiah was a wishy-washy king. Though he calls for Jeremiah several times and seems to want to hear from God, his fear of his officials and the people keep him from obeying the Lord. Do you have a faith that will stand up to pressure from those around you? What do you need to do to strengthen your faith?
3. "They misled you and overcame you--those trusted friends of yours" (38:22). Do you hear the sarcasm!! Those who counseled the king were really no friends at all for they persuaded him to ignore God's Word. What influence do your friends have on your faith - good or bad?