

Friday, June 9, 2017

**Lying**

Jeremiah 42-43

*When Jeremiah finished telling the people all the words of the LORD their God—everything the LORD had sent him to tell them—Azariah son of Hoshaiiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, "You are lying! The LORD our God has not sent you to say, 'You must not go to Egypt to settle there.'*  
Jeremiah 42:1-2

Different music, same song. It seemed this time that the request might be genuine. Johanan seems to be the type of leader that really wants to know what God's will and direction is. It soon becomes clear he was only looking for God to bless the plans he had already made. Before he asked for prayer, he had it set in his heart to take the people into Egypt. He had determined it was there that they would be safe. The request for prayer was a request for approval of his own plan. God knows the heart of every person and He knew the heart of Johanan. Tragedy was about to bring more tragedy, as those left behind would make the same mistake of not heeding the word of the Lord as spoken through Jeremiah. The consequence would be catastrophic. Am I always looking for God's direction when I turn to Him? Truth be told, there are times when I am looking for Him to give the nod to my well-laid plans. Have I ever accused God of lying or become angry with Him because He has not responded in the way I needed Him to? Have I forced my agenda anyway, convincing myself that somehow there would not be consequences?

*O LORD, You know me and You know that the answers to those last questions is "yes." Same song. Teach me to truly know what it means to look to You for Your will and then what it means to obey. Amen.*

June 5-10, 2017

Saturday, June 10, 2017

**Will not**

Jeremiah 44-45

*Then all the men who knew that their wives were burning incense to other gods, along with all the women who were present—a large assembly—and all the people living in Lower and Upper Egypt, said to Jeremiah, "We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD! We will certainly do everything we said we would: We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and will pour out drink offerings to her just as we and our fathers, our kings and our officials did in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. At that time we had plenty of food and were well off and suffered no harm."*

Jeremiah 44:15-17

The motive for the flight into Egypt becomes clear. They had given their heart to another god. The Queen of Heaven was a fertility goddess that could be worshiped freely in Egypt. Worship of this false god had become so assimilated into their lives that they would rather be away from the Sovereign King of Heaven than give up worshiping their own created goddess. They attributed the provisions of God to *her!* They were passionate in their response to Jeremiah: "We will not listen!" I am in this world, but I am not of this world. My home is in heaven and I await a Savior from there. But I am placed in this world for a season and for a purpose. My purpose is to serve my King in my season and then to be forever with Him. I must resist any type of assimilation that would cause me to love the things of this world more than my Father in Heaven. Even the good things in this world can become a snare to me and can capture me and cause my heart to rise up in this same type of defiance. I think of all the times I have resisted the moving of my loving Father by saying "I will not." I will not forgive. I will not repent. I will not \_\_\_\_\_.

*Dear Father who loves me, forgive my defiant heart. I do not want to say, "I will not!" I want to say, "Yes, LORD!" Please show me the places of defiance and move my heart to pliability. Shape my heart. Tune my ears. Amen.*



Monday, June 5, 2017

**Lesson** Jeremiah 34-35

*Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem, 'Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?' declares the LORD. 'Jonadab son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me.'"* Jeremiah 35:12-14

The Recabites were a small separatist clan that was related to Moses' father-in-law (Judges 1:16). They were nomadic in nature because of a command that one of their forefathers had placed on them. In obedience to the command, they did not drink any wine, nor build houses, nor plant vineyards. For more than 200 years, they had been obedient as a group of people to the rule passed down by one man. It was a testimony of obedience that God would use to challenge the disobedience of His people. The commands of the Lord had been received by Israel repeatedly. Time and again, they had covenanted to keep them—time and again, they did not. The Recabite obedience was a lesson for the people of Israel and for me today. Their obedience was fueled by the community of the clan. They did not want to dishonor the command that held them separate from all the other people. The lesson for the Israelites—and for me—is clear. I am part of a people of God. A chosen people, according to 1 Peter. Just as God has chosen the Israelites as a people for Himself, so He has chosen the Church as a people called out from among all others to live as a separatist clan, as He continues to work out His redemptive plan. This world is not my home. I need not focus too much effort in being comfortable here. There is a balance I must maintain. Also, I must, as one of the called out ones, live in obedience according to the covenant I made with God when I repented of my sin and turned to Him.

*Dear God, thank You for this example of a clan that remained obedient to just the command of a man. How can I be less focused on obedience to Your gracious guiding commands? May I learn to love Your commands and may I be faithful to keep them in community with all those who have been called out from this world. Amen.*

Tuesday, June 6, 2017

**Pray**

Jeremiah 36-37

*King Zedekiah, however, sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah with the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to Jeremiah the prophet with this message: "Please pray to the LORD our God for us." Jeremiah 37:3*

On the surface, this looks like a genuine request by the king. But closer examination of his legacy reveals that Zedekiah was a vacillating, indecisive ruler. He sent others to Jeremiah so that he would not lose the support of his officials. Jeremiah had been told by God not to pray for this people (7:16, 11:14, 14:11). I wonder how Jeremiah responded in his heart when the prayer request came. Though he would be put in prison as a traitor (37:13-15), he was far from it. He loved God and he loved God's people. His cry was for the people of God. If only the request of the king had been genuine. If only the king had really wanted God to be sought. But he did not. He wanted God to serve his own purposes—the very reason God told Jeremiah not to pray. God does not respond to self-serving prayers that are offered. In reality, they are not prayers at all. Self-serving prayers are offered to self. They spiral around in my head as a form of self-talk seeking to satisfy me. These are the "prayers" of a proud heart. I must constantly be seeking to have my prayers be God-seeking prayers that align my will with His and my heart with His—conversations that fold me into the palm of His hand.

*Dear God, so many times my prayers come from a proud heart and are self-seeking. Please forgive me. Help me to come to You with an open heart to hear Your truth and a broken heart that is ready to be shaped by You. Amen.*

Wednesday, June 7, 2017

**Sad**

Jeremiah 38-39

*This is how Jerusalem was taken: In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army and laid siege to it. Jeremiah 39:1*

The word for today—"sad"—describes how I feel as I read this chapter. An overwhelming sadness comes over me. It is a waste. I have read of the heart of God longing for the people He loves to love Him. I have read of Him pleading with them to return to Him and avoid this pain. I have read of His love for this city and of His desire that this city and its temple be a place where people could come to meet with Him. I have read that He longs for all the people of the world to know Him by the way His people relate to Him. And yet, as I read these few verses, which contain the climax of the punishment that has been deserved and meted out, I can feel nothing by sadness. We are told not to live in the "what ifs." But *what if?* What if the king had not been so indecisive and fearful? What if he had led the people into repentance and obedience? What if the people had responded? What if the Church today would respond? What if we moved out of our apathy and complacency? What if I step out in faith instead of fear? What if I stand against the marginalization that culture is trying to place on the greatest message ever given? There is a prophecy against this world. Just as this prophecy against Jerusalem came true, so also the prophecy against the entire world will come to pass. It has been written and it will be done. It will be a moment of great sadness. *What if?*

*Dear God, I wonder what Your heart was feeling on this day so long ago. I wonder what you felt as You watched Jerusalem fall. If such an overwhelming sense of sadness overcomes me, how did You feel? I know that You are sovereign, but You are loving. I know that You are just, but You are the God who is with us. We are Your creation and You hold us in Your hand and under Your wing. O Loving Father, may I love You with my whole being. May I never stand in the type of defiance that would cause You this type of pain. Amen.*

Thursday, June 8, 2017

**Wherever**

Jeremiah 40-41

*When the commander of the guard found Jeremiah, he said to him, "The LORD your God decreed this disaster for this place. And now the LORD has brought it about; he has done just as he said he would. All this happened because you people sinned against the LORD and did not obey him. But today I am freeing you from the chains on your wrists. Come with me to Babylon, if you like, and I will look after you: but if you do not want to, then don't come. Look, the whole country lies before you; go wherever you please." Jeremiah 40:2-4*

These are indeed interesting verses as Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, finds Jeremiah and sets him free. In the process, he speaks truth about what has just happened. Even though the Israelites as a whole were seemingly unaware of what was happening, the commander makes it clear that God has just brought judgment on His people because of their sin! Jeremiah was to be set free and now he had options. Jeremiah would be allowed to go anywhere he wanted. Perhaps the Babylonians knew that Jeremiah had told the people to obey them. At any rate, Jeremiah, when given the option to go wherever he pleased, chose the harder option. This was the way that Jeremiah lived. He could have gone into Babylon and been cared for by the commander of the guard. This would mean a far easier lifestyle than living in a war-ravaged land. Jeremiah knew the heart of God. He knew where God wanted him. He knew that he must go wherever God was pleased to send Him. As a true follower of Christ, I must be willing to do the same. I must learn to be pleased wherever God sends me. His pleasure becomes mine. Sometimes it would seem easier to run away, but I can have great confidence that God will give me whatever I need to be wherever He sends me.

*O LORD, thank You for setting me free. Just as with Jeremiah, You have set me free so that I can go wherever I please. Like Jeremiah, lead me to be pleased with the path and the place that pleases You. May I find my delight in Your care and in Your service. Amen.*