

**WE WILL MEET THIS COMING WEEK AS USUAL - APRIL 19 & 20!**

**FOR THE FOLLOWING TWO WEEKS – 4/26-27 & 5/3-4, I WILL BE ON VACATION AND THERE WILL BE NO CLASSES!**

**WE WILL RESUME MEETING MAY 10 & 11 AND THEREAFTER.**

**LOG IN INFO REMAINS UNCHANGED.**

**PLEASE NOTE WE WILL CONTINUE TO NEED A PASSCODE TO JOIN THE STUDY!**

**NOTES FOR THIS WEEK: 4/19-20/2021**

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: *Jeremiah Chapters 37-38***

**MONDAY 7 PM Bible Study - Time: 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)**

**THE MONDAY NIGHT STUDY HAS RESUMED MEETING IN CLASSROOM HS112, CCCM, AS WELL AS CONTINUING IN ZOOM!!**

**MEETING ID# - 87858644763 Passcode: 087484**

Join Zoom Meeting -

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87858644763?pwd=b25tUzhkaTE0UzIrSnpkVmZEWGJVQT09>

**Meeting ID: 878 5864 4763 - Passcode: 087484**

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**Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87858644763?pwd=b25tUzhkaTE0UzIrSnpkVmZEWGJVQT09>**

**TUESDAY 7 AM Bible Study - Time: 07:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada).**

**THE TUESDAY MORNING STUDY HAS RESUMED MEETING IN THE FAMILY ROOM, CCCM, AS WELL AS CONTINUING IN ZOOM!!**

**MEETING ID# - 85309150746 - Passcode: 715340**

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## OPENING PRAYER – Introduction *Jeremiah Chapters 35-36*

*King Zedekiah – disobedient, not committed to the LORD*

*Ebed-Melech – obedient, committed to the LORD!*

**TAKE MY LIFE AND LET IT BE** – Havergal (written in 1874)/Malan – Maranatha (3:27)

*Take my life, and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee:*

*Take my hands, and let them move At the impulse of Thy love: At the impulse of Thy love:*

*Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my voice, and let me sing, Always, only, for my King: Always, only, for my King:*

*Take my silver and my gold; Not a mite would I withhold:*

*Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise. Let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

*Take my will, and make it Thine; It shall be no longer mine:*

*Take my heart – it is Thine own; It shall be Thy royal throne. It shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my life, and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee:*

### THIS WEEK'S STUDY:

*Chap. 37 – Zedekiah's Vain Hope - (vs. 1-10); Jeremiah Imprisoned – (vs. 11-21); Chap. 38 – Jeremiah in the Dungeon – (vs. 1-13); Zedekiah's Fears and Jeremiah's Advice – (14-28).*

#### *Jeremiah Warns Zedekiah*

*Jer 37:1 Now King Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.*

- We have moved forward about 17 years from the end of last chapter. King Zedekiah is reigning now (597-586 B.C.) and will reign until Jerusalem falls in 586 B.C. In verses 5 & 11, reference is made to the siege – so chapters 37 & 38 are nearing the destruction of Judah. The seed of Jehoiakim is cut off, it moves over to his brother Zedekiah, and he now reigns on the throne in Judah. He was made a king by Nebuchadnezzar, and he was really a vassal king. However, encouraged by the princes and rulers in the land, he was sort of, just a figure head. They encouraged him to rebel against Babylon and encouraging them that they could conquer the Babylonians should they return.

*Jer 37:2 But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to the words of the LORD which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah.*

- Zedekiah became the king, but the people were not really listening to the Lord. The people of Judah would not give up their sin, even if it were going to cost their lives. Like with Samson, “sin blinds, sin binds and sin grinds!”

*Jer 37:3 And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Pray now to the LORD our God for us."*

- King Zedekiah, being a weak leader vacillated back and forth, somewhat like Pontius Pilate. He would be convicted at times, but then would be influenced by the other leaders in the land, and being fearful of them, he would bend to their wishes rather than to obey the word of the Lord. Here, as in subsequent chapters, he will come to Jeremiah, asking what the Lord is saying. But though he is interested, asking for prayer, he is not strong enough to obey what the Lord has to say.

*Jer 37:4 Now Jeremiah was coming and going among the people, for they had not yet put him in prison.*

- At the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah still had liberty. He was not yet in prison. He was able to move freely among the people.

*Jer 37:5 Then Pharaoh's army came up from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they departed from Jerusalem.*

- During **Zedekiah's** reign, **Jeremiah** was continuing to prophesy that the **Babylonian** army was going to come and besiege Jerusalem and take it. He was telling them to surrender, at least they would spare the city and spare their lives. If they sought to resist, the city would be destroyed, they would be killed.
- Now the false prophets were saying, "**The Babylonians will not besiege the city**, they will not build a mound against us, they are not going to come here." The people naturally listened to the false prophets, because they were saying the things the people wanted to hear.
- **The city of Jerusalem is under siege.** However, the king had sent to the Egyptians and asked for help. The Egyptians sent their army out and they were moving toward Israel. The Babylonians heard the Egyptians were coming, so they left the siege of Jerusalem to go fight against them. Seeing this, the false prophets were rejoicing. The Babylonians are gone! Happy days are here again!" Rather than really seeking the Lord, it was just party time again. Let us party!
- **But Jeremiah was saying the Babylonians are going to defeat the Egyptians**, and they are coming back! They are going to finish the job. God has ordained that they should bring His judgement against this city.

*Jer 37:6 Then the word of the LORD came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying,*

*Jer 37:7 "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Thus you shall say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: "Behold, Pharaoh's army which has come up to help you will return to Egypt, to their own land.*

*Jer 37:8 And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire." "*

- This is the message that **Jeremiah** was to give to the king. The king sent and he wanted to get My word, this is the word." Those **Chaldeans** that have gone forth, the Egyptians are going to retreat and go back to Egypt, and **the Chaldeans are going to come back** here and finish the job. They are going to **take this city and burn it with fire.'**

*Jer 37:9 Thus says the LORD: 'Do not deceive yourselves, saying, "The Chaldeans will surely depart from us," for they will not depart.*

- **Do not be deceived in thinking it is over....**The worst deception that can happen to our lives is self-deception! It is the word of God that keeps us from being self-deceived! That is why the Bible is referred to and likened to "the mirror of God's word". It will always tell us the truth about our situation, about what we should do, as Jeremiah was doing with Zedekiah and Judah.

*Jer 37:10 For though you had defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and there remained only wounded men among them, they would rise up, every man in his tent, and burn the city with fire.' "*

- **Jeremiah is letting them know that even if they defeat the Babylonian army, Jerusalem will still be burned with fire.** Judah is not fighting man but is fighting against God! When God is your problem, only God is your solution! He is the One bringing judgment on them because of their disobedience to His word and their idolatry! There is no escaping for them!

### **Jeremiah Imprisoned**

*Jer 37:11 And it happened, when the army of the Chaldeans left the siege of Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,*

*Jer 37:12 that Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin to claim his property there among the people.*

- **Jeremiah was likely heading back towards his home town of Anathoth**, possibly to see the property he had bought. The Babylonians had lifted the siege. People were able to move in and out of the city. Jeremiah went out the gate of Benjamin was the north gate of the city of Jerusalem, also known as the gate of Ephraim.

*Jer 37:13 And when he was in the Gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard was there whose name was Irijah the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he seized Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "You are defecting to the Chaldeans!"*

*Jer 37:14 Then Jeremiah said, "False! I am not defecting to the Chaldeans." But he did not listen to him. So Irijah seized Jeremiah and brought him to the princes.*

***Jer 37:15 Therefore the princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe. For they had made that the prison.***

- **As Jeremiah was preparing to leave the city, he was arrested by Irijah**, the captain of the guard, who said that he was defecting to the Chaldeans! A big argument ensued but the captain would not listen to Jeremiah. He arrested him and brought him to the princes, the rulers of the land, who were angry with Jeremiah because they thought he was deserting to the enemy, in that Jeremiah was encouraging defecting to the Babylon. Thus, they arrested him.
- **Struck him and put him in prison. Do we think it strange** that such an obedient and faithful prophet of God could be treated this way? Is it not true that all believers can expect some form or type of persecution in their lives? Jesus said, **Joh 15:18** *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.* Paul the Apostle said, **2Ti 3:12** *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

***Jer 37:16 When Jeremiah entered the dungeon and the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days,***

- **Most of the houses in Jerusalem had their own cistern**, which they used as water reservoirs. They had ingenious ways of entrapping the rain. Over time, the cisterns would become cracked and no longer hold water. It was easy then, to use these as a dungeon, such as they had done here with Jonathan's house. Jeremiah was in prison there in the dungeon, **remaining there for many days** because of the accusation **that he was defecting** to the Babylonians.

***Jer 37:17 then Zedekiah the king sent and took him out. The king asked him secretly in his house, and said, "Is there any word from the LORD?" And Jeremiah said, "There is." Then he said, "You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon!"***

- **Zedekiah was a weak leader.** He secretly desired to hear what God had to say, but he would not follow what God had to say, because he was afraid for the others to know that he was seeking the wisdom of God from Jeremiah. The others wanted to listen to the false prophets. They did not like what Jeremiah was saying.
- **Is there any word from the LORD? There is! King Zedekiah**, you really don't want to hear it, for **Jeremiah said, You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon!"**

***Jer 37:18 Moreover Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, "What offense have I committed against you, against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison?"***

- **What have I done? What offense have I committed?** I have only said, what the LORD has told me to say!

***Jer 37:19 Where now are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, 'The king of Babylon will not come against you or against this land?'***

- **Where are the false prophets now?** You know. "I got into trouble saying the Babylonians would come. The false prophets were saying, 'No, no they're not going to come against Jerusalem, but where are is their army now?"

***Jer 37:20 Therefore please hear now, O my lord the king. Please, let my petition be accepted before you, and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there."***

- **Please** do not send me back to that dungeon! I will **die there!**

***Jer 37:21 Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah to the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread from the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was gone. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison. (2Ki 25:2-3) So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.***

- **This verse takes us through the time of the siege of the city.** The Babylonians have come back, the people are now running short of bread. Jeremiah is in prison now in the king's court, being given his daily ration of bread. The siege was beginning to really take hold, and they have begun to run out of bread.

***Jeremiah Cast into the Cistern***

**Jer 38:1** Now Shephatiah the son of Mattan, Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, saying,

**Jer 38:2** "Thus says the LORD: 'He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes over to the Chaldeans shall live; his life shall be as a prize to him, and he shall live.'

- **Shephatiah, Jucal, and Pashhur** heard what Jeremiah had said to the people, that whoever remains in Jerusalem **shall die by the sword, famine and pestilence! But whoever goes over to the Chaldeans shall live!** Whenever a city would be under siege for a long period, you would get this condition of famine and pestilence. The sanitation is bad, the water gets bad. There is a shortage of food, the people are beginning to suffer malnutrition. It always follows that disease begins to become rampant. The body is not capable of warding off the diseases and all and so pestilence always sets in.
- **He that goes forth to the Chaldeans shall live.** The way of escaping death is surrendering. Going out and surrendering. Verse 19 tells us that a number had already defected. They had heard Jeremiah and had defected to the Chaldeans.

**Jer 38:3** Thus says the LORD: 'This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.' "

- **It is very definite, very certain, this city is going to be delivered,** it is going to be captured, Babylon's king is going to take it.

**Jer 38:4** Therefore the princes said to the king, "Please, let this man be put to death, for thus he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm."

- **Please, let this man be put to death!** They wanted to get rid of Jeremiah. They thought they could escape the judgement of God by destroying the prophet of God. But you cannot alter what God has determined! Jeremiah is only a messenger of God, yet the people are angry with God's message and they want to kill the messenger! "Therefore, the princes said, we beg you, **put him to death.**" They are accusing him of treason. He is demoralizing the army. He is demoralizing the people and they are being weakened by the things that he is saying.

**Jer 38:5** Then Zedekiah the king said, "Look, he is in your hand. For the king can do nothing against you."

- **He admitted his weakness in the powerful rulers.** "Who am I, you know? I can't fight you guys. Do what you want." Again, the weakness of **Zedekiah**, as he is just passing this off to his powerful rulers. Like Pilate, "my hands are clean". You do what you want with him!

**Jer 38:6** So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king's son, which was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire. (Lam 3:55-57) I called on Your name, O LORD, From the lowest pit. [56] You have heard my voice: "Do not hide Your ear From my sighing, from my cry for help." [57] You drew near on the day I called on You, And said, "Do not fear!"

- **Quoting from historian Josephus "The Essential Writings", (pg. 179):** "The prophet Jeremiah, had been thrown into prison by his enemies. Yet he urged the people to open their gates to the king of Babylon and save themselves; otherwise, they would be destroyed by famine or sword. But the leaders angrily denounced him to Zedekiah, accusing the prophet of undermining the people's morale, and they persuaded the king to turn Jeremiah over to them. Taking him from prison, they let him down by ropes into a pit, full of mud. There, they assumed, he would suffocate and die by his own hand, so to speak. **Jeremiah remained up to his neck in mud** until one of the king's servants reported the prophet's predicament to the king, pleading on his behalf. Regretting his original decision, the king ordered Jeremiah rescued and brought to the palace, where he asked his advice. Again the prophet urged Zedekiah to surrender to the Babylonians, or else see the temple burned and the city destroyed."
- **Can you imagine? Here you are, serving God,** doing your best to be a true servant and a prophet of God. Surely God would take care of you wouldn't He? I mean after all, you are loving God! You are

serving the Lord. You are saying these things in the name of the Lord. "Lord why would You allow me to be in this muck down here in the bottom. Sinking in the mire in the bottom of a dungeon?"

- **Somehow, we have a false kind of a concept that if we are true in our service to God, everything will always be just fine with us.** There will be no problems at all. But like Moses, (*Heb 11:25-27*) *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, [26] esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. [27] By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.* They saw what others did not see. The glorious eternal kingdom of God, and that is where they had placed their value. So, Jeremiah is sinking in the mire there in the dungeon.

### ***Jeremiah Rescued from the Cistern***

***Jer 38:7 Now Ebed-Melech (the servant of the king) the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs (officers), who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon. When the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin,***

- **In the privacy of his own heart, he recognized the injustice of all of this.** He has a reverence of God. A strong sense of right and wrong!! Even though he is an advisor and friend of the king, at this point he is being pushed to a place where he cannot keep silent. He has to say something. These are his convictions. This is the quality of the man that he is. When you were a eunuch or an officer to a king, to confront the king with any wrongdoing on his part, automatically puts your life jeopardy!
- **It is a big thing for him to speak up in the way he is going to speak up!** But with a man like *Ebed-Melech*, looks at the situation and he realizes, if I do not say anything, I will not be able to live with myself for the rest of my life! I have to do something about what I see happening to this prophet of God, even at risk to myself! He goes and intercedes for Jeremiah before the king, who was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin.

***Jer 38:8 Ebed-Melech went out of the king's house and spoke to the king, saying:***

***Jer 38:9 "My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is likely to die from hunger in the place where he is. For there is no more bread in the city."***

- **He spoke to the king** saying, "*My lord the king, these men have done evil!* Wow, this is a guy who has been stirred to his core! What is happening here is not a mild injustice! This is what is within his heart! He is putting his life at risk to do this. These men could readily do to him what they have done to Jeremiah! The siege is taking hold. There is no bread! Jeremiah will surely *die in* that dungeon!
- **You leave him in that hole, he is going to die!** Now this is the very thing that *Zedekiah* wanted to get around. He gave him to *the princes*, so they would do this, so that the trail of responsibility would not come back to the king. Yet, anybody that wanted to look at it, would say, you cannot handle that, that way, like Pontius Pilate! You cannot wash your hands in this way. You have got the authority! You are responsible here! You need to make the right decision in all of this. He will die in that hole in the ground!
- **Self-preservation, an important part of our flesh, would have meant just laying low!** If you are in *Ebed-Melech's* place, saying what is a servant going to do? I am doing the best that I can. I am praying for the king every day! I chime in and tell him what I think, when he asked my opinion. But here I am, a comparative nobody. What influence could I ever have, related to the situation? Here is *Ebed-Melech*, long ago, living out what Edmund Burke in 1770, warned the world against. "*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.*" *Ebed-Melech* stands up as a good man!
- **The temptation can often be for us, with all the injustice that is going on, just to remain silent.** To just hold our breath and say, I hope it does not come near me! I know it is gobbling up this nation; or that nation; or this race or that race; or whatever. We just look and say, all right I do not like it, but I am not going to say anything, but deep in my heart, I just hope that the injustice that is going on here, does not reach into my household and into my life!
- **If everybody remained silent, then how in the world would evil ever be stopped?** Who would begin to make the stand against evil? It is an important statement in our world today. Not just where we are politically in the world, but morally and Spiritually, where we are in this nation. We are moving toward, if not fully entrenched in evil. It needs to be resisted!

- **There needs to be a stand made against it.** It is the world's worst time for God's people to go silent, in terms of the history of our nation. We have enjoyed the benefits of the Judeo-Christian ethic. Now they are being taken away or threatened. Now it is time for us to make a stand, in a way that maybe nobody has had to make a stand since the original people knew God made a stand to afford us these freedoms, setting in motion, a Biblical morality that is marked our nation for over 200 years.
- **Whether in a school or in a workplace, or in a city, or in a nation, or wherever it may be, someone has to have the kind of convictions that *Ebed-Melech* has here,** where they say I cannot live with myself. Forget about what others think about me, I cannot live with myself, if I do not make a stand here. At this point, they have pushed too far! We can see the importance of doing that.
- **Another quote that is famous in this regard, was that of Martin Niemöller (1892-1984), one who spoke out in Nazi Germany, against Hitler.** Niemöller enthusiastically welcomed the Third Reich. But a turning point in Niemöller's political sympathies came with a January 1934 meeting of Adolf Hitler, Niemöller, and two prominent Protestant bishops to discuss state pressures on churches. At the meeting it became clear that Niemöller's phone had been tapped by the Gestapo (German Secret State Police). It was also clear that the Pastors Emergency League (PEL), which Niemöller had helped found, was under close state surveillance. Following the meeting, Niemöller would come to see the Nazi state as a dictatorship, one which he would oppose. He is perhaps best remembered for the quotation, made during the postwar period:

*“First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.  
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”*

- **Here is a pastor in Nazi Germany, who ends up getting arrested over it, spending the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps, despite his ardent nationalism.** But he recognized that even before he made his stand, this progression that was occurring, not within Nazis, but within the church in Nazi Germany, in those days! The idea was it was okay, those people are getting imprisoned now, but it now me yet! Those people are getting imprisoned unjustly, but it is not me yet. Not it is these people, in the hope that it will not reach me! That is how evil gets emboldened! How it gets strengthened! What a beautiful stand he makes!
- **One of the great things about *Ebed-Melech*, we hear it spoken all the time, related to Christian ministries.** We say, well, the government can never change! Or there is the separation of church and state, and we cannot cross that. They will never let us do this, as Christians. How often, all it takes is just someone to make a stand and say, can we do this? Can we help you here? Can we hold this kind of a meeting, or whatever it might be? And you never know until you ask. Often, the answer comes immediately back as a “yes”. Here is *Ebed-Melech*. He has no idea what the response is going to be, but he would never know, unless he asked. Unless he spoke up. So, he did! Doing the right thing can be very risky business, depending on the moral climate of a nation. But it still needs to be done.

***Jer 38:10 Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, "Take from here thirty men with you, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies."***

- ***Then the king commanded.*** Then here is this wonder of wonders! No doubt, God was involved in all of this, as well. The king ordered, giving permission to *Ebed-Melech* to step in and take care of Jeremiah this way, rescuing him from this cruel thing.
- ***You have not because you ask not! He asks.*** The king says, do it! Not only you go and get him out of that but take 30 men with you because that is what it is going to take to put a rope around the guy and bring him up out of that kind of mire! How deep in the mire, is he? Here is what Josephus wrote *“Jeremiah remained up to his neck in mud until one of the king's servants reported the prophet's predicament to the king, pleading on his behalf.”*

***Jer 38:11 So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took from there old clothes and old rags, and let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah.***

- ***He took the thirty men with him*** and went into the house of the king under the treasury. But *Ebed-Melech* wanted to go to the area of the treasury, where there were some old clothes and old garments, lying around there. Some old rags. He got them and then he *let* the old clothes *down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah*. What kindness we see here!

***Jer 38:12 Then Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, "Please put these old clothes and rags under your armpits, under the ropes." And Jeremiah did so.***

- **Now they were going to have to pull him out of this muck in the bottom of the dungeon**, and pull him up with ropes, and it was probably quite deep. *Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah*, put the rags **under your arms**, and **the ropes** under those, so that we can lift you out and the ropes won't be cutting your arms as you're being pulled up. It would make sort of a cushion for the ropes as they were under his arms. Here they are pulling old Jeremiah up out of this dungeon. Can you get the picture, you know? An obedient Prophet of God and here he is getting pulled out of this dungeon, mud dripping off his feet and all as he is coming up.

***Jer 38:13 So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.***

- **Remember we are about at the end of this siege. Jeremiah must have been just skin and bones**, like everybody except the king. You could surely count Jeremiah's ribs! Now he has been thrown in the pit, even closer to starvation. So, to take and try to pull him out, just rope against no muscle, no substantial flesh anything, like that maybe would have broken a ribs, torn him in way.
- **An amazing act of kindness! Not only did Ebed-Melech think to rescue him, but then this act of kindness!** Isn't it amazing? We have all been in this place in life where we are in a special vulnerability in some situation in life? Where an act of kindness goes a long way. It is never forgotten! I am sure that Jeremiah never forgot what *Ebed-Melech* did in pulling him out of the hole, and the whole act of kindness related to the rags.
- **God remembered Ebed-Melech's kindness – (Jer 39:17) But I will deliver you in that day," says the LORD and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid.** We know God noticed it, because God is going to reward him for that! These little things that we think are nothing, sometimes people never acknowledge, they never say anything, but God keeps it alive in their hearts. It is a testimony to the LORD. It give us a place where we can then speak into their lives if they do not know about the LORD or the things of the LORD, in a way we would not otherwise have. A little thing, a little tiny thing, in just the right moment is so, so powerful. It is one of the lessons of *Ebed-Melech* here.

***Jeremiah Warns Zedekiah Again***

***Jer 38:14 Then Zedekiah the king sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him at the third entrance of the house of the LORD. And the king said to Jeremiah, "I will ask you something. Hide nothing from me."***

- **The first and second entries were for the public, then the priests.** The third entry likely was a secret, private entry for the king. A place of privacy and secrecy. So, the king took Jeremiah into this passage.

***Jer 38:15 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I declare it to you, will you not surely put me to death? And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me."***

- **Why should I answer. It is putting me in jeopardy.** You might kill me for what I say.. You are not going to listen anyhow, so why should I tell you anything? It's only going to make you mad, and you're not going to listen, so what's the use in telling you?"

***Jer 38:16 So Zedekiah the king swore secretly to Jeremiah, saying, "As the LORD lives, who made our very souls, I will not put you to death, nor will I give you into the hand of these men who seek your life."***

- **I will not put you to death, nor will I give you into the hand..** the king is now promising that he would protect Jeremiah. "But I want to know what God has to say." You do really wonder why he would want to know what God had to say, if he was not going to obey it. There are people who are curious as to what God has to say. The king was curious. He wanted to know what the future held for him and all.
- **There are a lot of people who** want to know what the bible has to say about the events that are taking place in the world today. They find biblical prophecy quite fascinating. And indeed, it is! But, the word of God is not of true value to you, unless you are keeping the word of God! The importance of obeying the commandments, of doing the word of God, over against just hearing it.

**Jer 38:17** Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: 'If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then your soul shall live; this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live.

**Jer 38:18** But if you do not surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans; they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand.' "

- **You can spare yourself if you will just surrender.** Just put up the white flag and *surrender*. The city will be spared. It will not be burned, you and your house will be spared.
- **The next chapter tells us that when the city finally fell, the king tried to escape by night.** He went out this passage from Jerusalem and was trying to escape through the plains of Jericho. But how they pursued after him and caught him and all. So, the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled.

**Jer 38:19** And Zedekiah the king said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Jews who have defected to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they abuse me."

- **A poor excuse for not obeying the Lord, that fear of being mocked.** Many people today, like King *Zedekiah*, are not obeying the commands of God, just because of the fear of what people will say, of the ridicule that they might endure. They secretly want to know what God has to say, and they do not want others to know that they want to know. They try to hide their curiosity. But they are afraid that people are going to make fun of them.

**Jer 38:20** But Jeremiah said, "They shall not deliver you. Please, obey the voice of the LORD which I speak to you. You have not because you ask not! He asks. So it shall be well with you, and your soul shall live.

- **God still pleads with men today.** Just receive Jesus Christ, just believe and you will live! Just surrender your life to Him. Turn your life over. For those who are do depressed, discouraged, wanting even to commit suicide, they need to be told to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. Live for Jesus Christ! You have come to a great discovery when you have discovered there is nothing to live for in this world, but oh, how much there is to live for when you have committed your life to Jesus Christ!
- **Here's Jeremiah begging Zedekiah, "Go ahead! You will live! It is your only hope! You will spare the city, you will spare your own life, your family, you can live you know!** You do not need to be destroyed, and for the city to be destroyed. Just go ahead and submit. I beg you! *Obey the voice of the LORD*, that your soul may live!"

**Jer 38:21** But if you refuse to surrender, this is the word that the LORD has shown me:

- **You are responsible.** God has given you His word, over and over and still is!

**Jer 38:22** 'Now behold, all the women who are left in the king of Judah's house shall be surrendered to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say: "Your close friends have set upon you And prevailed against you; Your feet have sunk in the mire, And they have turned away again."

**Jer 38:23** 'So they shall surrender all your wives and children to the Chaldeans. You shall not escape from their hand, but shall be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon. And you shall cause this city to be burned with fire.' "

- **Here is what is going to happen!** This is the consequence of your disobedience. Destruction is always the consequence of disobedience.

**Jer 38:24** Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Let no one know of these words, and you shall not die.

**Jer 38:25** But if the princes hear that I have talked with you, and they come to you and say to you, 'Declare to us now what you have said to the king, and also what the king said to you; do not hide it from us, and we will not put you to death,'

**Jer 38:26** then you shall say to them, 'I presented my request before the king, that he would not make me return to Jonathan's house to die there.' " **Jer 37:20** Therefore please hear now, O my lord the king. Please, let my petition be accepted before you, and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there."

- I did not want to go back to that dungeon in the mire! If I do, I will die there!

**Jer 38:27** *Then all the princes came to Jeremiah and asked him. And he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they stopped speaking with him, for the conversation had not been heard.*

- They did not catch on that the king was really seeking guidance and counsel.

**Jer 38:28** *Now Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken. And he was there when Jerusalem was taken.*

- **God is begging! Save yourself! Go on out and defect to the Babylonians!** Your house will be spared, your lives will be spared, and your children will be spared! The city will be spared! I beg you! Go ahead and surrender! If you do not, then the city's going to be burned with fire, your lives are going to be ravaged by the Babylonians. You are going to be taken as a captive, your children are going to be slain and that is what is going to happen! Now as **Zedekiah** is being taken captive to Babylon, he looks back and sees the smoke of the city, the thing is in rubble.
- **In the next chapter, we find Jerusalem taken by the Babylonians and the prophecies of Jeremiah fulfilled.** The horrible consequences of disobeying the command of God. The very things that God had warned came to pass.
- **Many often make a mistake concerning God, in that we blame God** for the calamities that come to pass in our life. Whereas the calamities are often just the natural consequence of our disobedience. Now God knows what the consequence of our disobedience will be, so He can tell you in advance what will be the result of actions on your part. So, you go ahead and do those things that God said you should not do, and the things that God said would happen, happen.
- **How wrong it would be to say, God is not fair! Because look what God did to me.** Look what God did to the city." No! You did it by your disobedience! God gave you a way out. You did not take the way out. Thus, if a person should have that tragic misfortune of ending in hell, it would be absolutely wrong to say, "God isn't fair to send me to this horrible place!" No!! He did not send you there, He begged you to turn from your sin, to receive Jesus Christ, that you might escape that place. He did all that He could do, short of violating your free will, which He gave to you, to keep you from there. God does not send men to hell. Men go there by their own willful choice. Choosing to disobey God and the word of God. They choose their own destiny, and God cannot be blamed!

### **Application: Am I a Zedekiah or an Ebed-Melech?**

#### **Disobedience to God's Word: (Zedekiah)**

- **Remember sinning Judah, their problem was not Babylon, it was God who would bring judgment! - When God is your problem, only God is your solution!**
- **Thus says the LORD: 'Do not deceive yourselves - The worst deception that can happen to our lives is self-deception! It is the word of God that keeps us from being self-deceived!**
- **Jer 38:15** *Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I declare it to you...And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me."* Do I ever ask the LORD for guidance or help and then not obey His answer, because of fearing man or of not liking His answer?

#### **Obedience to God's Word; (Ebed-Melech)**

- **How closely does my life and my actions reflect those of an *Ebed-Melech*?**
- **How often, if ever, have I looked at the situation, realizing, if I do not say anything, I will not be able to live with myself for the rest of my life!**
- **Am I ever willing to speak up, coming against evil, even if it may be dangerous for me? If everybody practiced my silence, would evil ever be stopped? You have not because you ask not! He asks.**
- **Am I willing to be quiet as long as the evil is not coming against me? Remember Martin Niemöller!**
- **Considering the act of kindness of *Ebed-Melech* getting rags for Jeremiah? How often am I doing even little acts of kindness for those in need? Remember the "rags" when you think you have nothing to offer.**
- **God remembered *Ebed-Melech*'s kindness - Jer 39:17** *But I will deliver you in that day," says the LORD, "and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid.*

### **Closing Prayer:**