

OCTOBER 21

Today you get the adventures of Jeremiah, and this is the last day in 1 Timothy, which means you'll begin 2 Timothy tomorrow. All of these readings are full of the heart of God, real life drama and encouragement which we need for the harvest.

Jeremiah 37-38

Jeremiah 37

This actually took place before Jeremiah bought the property in chapter 32. Today we find out how Jeremiah got put in jail back in 32. But the point today is to show how God saved Jeremiah, to show what a noodle Zedekiah was, and to show how God, even in this late, dark hour, gave Zedekiah a chance to save himself and the city.

Vs. 1-5 This is some background. This would have also been the time when they had set the slaves free, thinking they were all doomed. But now the Babylonians had withdrawn from the city to fight the Egyptians, and so the people re-enslaved their former slaves.

Vs. 6-10 They were hoping for good news from Jeremiah, but God assured everyone that Nebuchadnezzar would be back. In fact, God said that if only wounded soldiers were left, they would take the city.

Vs. 11-15 So this is how Jeremiah got thrown in prison. His visit home might have been to decide over the estate of a relative. Since they threw Jeremiah into prison, in chapter 32 we saw how the family had to come to Jerusalem and see if Jeremiah wanted to redeem that property from a deceased relative. The family probably thought Jeremiah was dumb for doing this since the land was already under Babylon's control, but God told Jeremiah to do it. He used that "redemption" event as a sign for the future hope of Israel.

Notice that they beat Jeremiah.

Vs. 16-21 This is the first of two interactions Jeremiah would have with Zedekiah. Notice v. 19. It is interesting that although the false prophets had lost credibility, the people still didn't want to listen to a true prophet of God. They irrationally thought that if they could kill the messenger, the judgment of God would also go away.

Again, even though Jeremiah was locked up and in danger, he might have been in more danger if he had been out with the starving people.

Jeremiah 38

Vs. 1-4 Being in the king's court gave Jeremiah the freedom to preach and get his message out. That didn't make these guys happy.

Vs. 5-6 We'll see in a few verses what a scared man Zedekiah really was. Interestingly enough, they wanted to kill Jeremiah, but not be responsible for his death. This cistern would have been like a deep room under a house that held rain water. The water was gone but the mud was still there. Rather than kill Jeremiah or just throw him in, they lowered him into the mud so he wouldn't be killed in the fall but would die of "natural" causes like suffocation or starvation. Nice guys.

Vs. 7-13 So you find this Ethiopian eunuch, a God-fearing Gentile, saving the day. Did you know that there were two Ethiopian eunuchs in the Bible and both were God-fearing men? This is quite an adventure. The ESV says 30 men, but some other versions say three. Who knows? Thirty might seem like over-kill, but some of them probably were for lifting, while others were to ward off the bad guys. After this, Zedekiah did a better job of protecting Jeremiah.

Vs. 14-26 This is quite a portion of Scripture. Zedekiah was a weak, scared man. If he had listened, I'm sure the Lord would have done exactly what He promised. Zedekiah and the city would have been saved. This is very sad. Zedekiah and many people will pay for this disobedience. In four chapters, we will see another group of people make the same mistake of asking Jeremiah for God's Word and then disobeying it.

Vs. 27-28 Zedekiah had reason to worry, but had no faith to obey.

The kind of faith and resolve, we are taught by the Spirit, gives us the willingness to obey and follow the truth even if it means our death. That is why as disciples in the harvest following our Lord we also bear a cross and never leave home without it. It shows that we belong to Him and hear His voice.

1 Timothy 6

Vs. 1-2 Notice that Paul is concerned here with how non-Christians viewed God as a result of the behavior of the saved slaves.

Vs. 3-5 There is a lot to observe here.

Notice that Paul didn't have an open mind regarding these issues or these people. Timothy was to teach them and anyone who taught otherwise was not only in the wrong, they were evil.

It looks like there were available copies of the Gospels and Jesus' teachings. In fact, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke would have been finished and in circulation. There were already teachers disagreeing with Jesus.

Finally, it looks like some people saw Christianity as a good way to make a living.

Vs. 6-10 This looks like the difference between people who are following Jesus in the harvest and those who are living for themselves in church. Since Paul had access to the Gospels, I'm sure this teaching matched what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. *And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.* (Luke 8:14) Can you see this verse in what Paul is saying here? I think the thorns are there also.

Vs. 11-12 Timothy was to be fully devoted. I think this teaching is meant to be imitated by all of Jesus' disciples who are following Him in the harvest. There are several sermons packed into these two verses. Notice in v. 11, at the end of the list is *gentleness*. The person who is the deepest in the Lord has the greatest security and control in the storm.

There is a conscious fight in following the Lord in the harvest every day. It is work to pick up the Bible, and it is work to carry the message into the field. That is why the Lord said we needed to take up the cross, our resolve to die for Him, every day. *Take hold* is the same as putting on the helmet of salvation. It is living securely in that reality. You can take a lot of beating and strain if you know you'll live forever with the King.

Vs. 13-16 This is the primary and strongest charge to Timothy in the book. There is a lot to see here. If you look at what Jesus said to Pilate, you understand that Jesus claimed to be the King. Actually, if you put all of the accounts together, Jesus was fairly chatty. He never defended Himself, but when it had to do with His kingship, He spoke. Notice too that the coming of the Lord is mentioned in this charge. It is never to be out of our sight.

Vs. 17-19 This wasn't meant to insure salvation for the rich, but rather to show who was the real Lord and Master of their lives. Notice that this fits into what Jesus says about riches in the Sermon on the Mount. *Take hold* means living in the reality of. If we have other things that are more important to us, then the reality of the spiritual life, the Lord's leading and our mission on earth, become strangely dim and foggy to us.

Vs. 20-21 Paul wouldn't have cautioned Timothy like this if he hadn't seen the possibility that Timothy could get off track. All of us can become unfocused or distracted or caught up in something that leads us away from our work in the harvest. Just like us, Timothy was in constant need of grace.

Whatever had happened in Ephesus and whatever was brewing in that post-Acts period of time was used by the Lord to give us this book and the one that follows. We are seeing a first-generation disciple working with a second-generation disciple, making disciples for the future. There is a lot of great Scripture in this letter and in the next, but what is most obvious is how the love of Christ had made Paul into this very passionate and wise maker of disciples. The same will happen to us if we stay close to the Lord in His Word and in the harvest.

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (1 Cor. 6:17)

Psalm 89:38-52

Now we get to the real pain of this psalm. It looks like it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. We are about to read about this destruction in Jeremiah. This psalm could have been written in Babylon or in the days of the first groups that returned to the ruined Jerusalem after the exile.

Vs. 38-45 If you want to follow the trail of destruction and judgment, just underline *you*.

Vs. 46-48 This is a short description of our helplessness in this universe without the Lord.

Vs. 49-52 As he waited on God to restore and fulfill His promises, the psalmist never forgot the *steadfast love* of the Lord and to bless the Lord for His *faithfulness*. God had made a promise to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, and to David that a Savior would come; and it was guaranteed to happen because all of those promises were anchored in the very character and person of God.

Vs. 50-51 This morning I was reading how Jesus was mocked while He hung on the cross, while pouring out His soul for our redemption and paying for our sins.

Proverbs 25:28

Amen.