

OCTOBER 23

Jeremiah 42-44:23

As mentioned before, one thing that shows you the Bible is the Word of God, and not the official national literature of Israel, is that no national literature ever describes its rulers and people in this way. After yesterday you might have thought that things couldn't get worse. Today they do.

Jeremiah 42

Vs. 1-4 God has an interesting way of showing people their depth of rebellion. This seems like a good thing. They want to know God's will and they want to seek Him through Jeremiah.

Vs. 5-6 The people took an oath that they would obey.

Vs. 7-22 The only clue that there is something wrong is in vs. 18-22. There would be no need for this warning if there wasn't a danger. I think in the ten days they waited for Jeremiah, they worried, had discussions, and made up their minds what they needed to do. It must have seemed so obvious and they thought for sure that Jeremiah would confirm it.

God promised them blessing, but not according to the direction they wanted to go. Poor Jeremiah. O Weh!

Jeremiah 43

Vs. 1-3 Why is this not a surprise? Interestingly, they blamed Baruch for this. Apparently, Baruch was a well-known man outside of his association with Jeremiah, politically or financially or socially. All of chapter 45 is devoted to Baruch, all 5 verses of it. That chapter dates back to his first involvement with Jeremiah, implying that Baruch had hopes of greatness in life. God told Baruch back then, almost 20 years earlier, that He would give Baruch his life as a prize of war, but that there would be no greatness to be found living in those times in Israel.

Vs. 4-7 They took Jeremiah and Baruch along with them at "gunpoint." They must have thought that going to Egypt made sense and that no danger would follow them since Egypt was a world power and they had now traveled between 100 and 150 miles further south and away from Babylon.

Vs. 8-13 Even as God says this, we still don't grasp how lost and perverse this group of refugees was. That will come in the next chapter. It is almost as if God was going to curse Egypt for them being there. God showed the Jews where Nebuchadnezzar would set up his tent and his throne. Even in this dangerous situation, God gave Jeremiah a word that put him in harm's way. Jeremiah had been the only one of the many prophets who spoke to Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who had been right. The people knew this, but there is an irrationality in sin that chooses to think that there is a way to "get around" God.

Jeremiah 44:1-24

Vs. 1-10 This all seems like a general declaration against the people's rebellion for disobeying and running to Egypt until you get to v. 8. These people were sick and would never change their hearts. These circumstances revealed publicly what God knew was concealed in their hearts.

Vs. 11-14 God was promising to give these people a very special attention. His judgment would come on them first because they set their hearts to go to Egypt. That was their recent decision and act of disobedience. Notice that there would be some survivors. Anyone like Jeremiah and Baruch who had been taken captive by them would be saved.

Vs. 15-19 Here the people are declaring their own sickness and guilt. Deeply anchored in their hearts was a rejection of God and a devotion toward everything else.

Vs. 20-23 We understand the truth of this and God's justice in punishing these people, but they didn't. As we work in the harvest we see this quite often. We present people with the truth, and even when it is obvious to them, sin often gains the upper hand and leads them away. Even though people understand what they are doing makes no sense, they will choose what makes no sense, rather than coming to God. There is an invisible spiritual resistance deeply seeded within us. Thankfully there are some people who hear the voice of truth and welcome it. That is our joy in the harvest, seeing them come to Christ and then become disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples.

2 Timothy 2:1-21

In this entire letter there is a sense of urgency and importance. Try to sense that in this chapter as you read.

V. 1 *You then, my child.* So what is *then* referring to? I think it is all of chapter 1, particularly the need to stand and suffer for Christ. It is like saying, "in light of this reality, do this."

What does it mean for a disciple to *be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*? What do you find in Christ that is grace? Some of this is referring to what was said in chapter 1, but just thinking about what we have in knowing Jesus is amazing grace, and dwelling on it is meant to make us strong.

V. 2 Not just teaching, but entrusting truth for the next generation. This is part of making disciples, who make disciples.

Vs. 3-7 This isn't just for the "professional" Christian; this is for every disciple. Yet, especially for those in full-time service, this is a call to a very focused life.

Notice the call, again, to suffering for Christ and the gospel.

V. 6, I think Paul is referring to working hard and trusting God for both fruit and daily provision.

V. 7 is quite a promise and I think I've seen the fruit of this many times.

Vs. 8-13 I think this is a call to Timothy to be a disciple and know what he's living for. The gospel is at the center of this, and Paul's life is the example.

Notice that the last part of this "saying" or "poem" is actually something Jesus told His disciples on at least a couple of occasions. Actually, you can find parts of this throughout Jesus' and Paul's words.

Matthew 10:33 - *but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.*

As mentioned in the Gospels, being denied before the Father may refer to not being given the help needed at a certain time. Since a person is already "helping" himself by not confessing Christ, there is no need for Jesus to appeal to the Father for special provision for that person as he gives testimony, since that person is avoiding giving testimony and therefore saving himself.

V. 13 is a comfort of sorts. If we belong to Christ, we are unconditionally saved and even if we are unfaithful, He will hold on to us. Remember, this was the beginning of a very bad time for Christians in the Roman world.

Vs. 14-18 It's too bad that we only read to v. 21 today.

Notice that there are two cautions here to avoid quarrels, and in the middle, Timothy is told to focus on his understanding and presentation of the truth.

V. 15 This is a call for every disciple to know the Word well.

The *irreverent babble* is defined as being the false teaching of Hymenaeus (remember him from 1 Tim. 1?) and Philetus. But the *quarrel about words* (v. 14) is not something we understand. I

wonder sometimes if some of this isn't the theological hair-splitting that goes on over issues like free will and election. The focus for Timothy was to teach well what was understandable and to remember that his behavior was always supposed to honor God in the harvest.

Vs. 19-21 We don't always know who is a true believer, but God does. Remember in 1 Timothy 5, when Paul tells Timothy not to approve of people too quickly? This is an extension of that. I'm sure that these two men were well-known. There are always people in the church who are believers, but not following. There are believers who are focused on themselves and their standing in the group. God will even use them, but then, in spite of themselves.

Do you see what Paul is saying in this illustration? Some disciples submit to God and are used for noble purposes, and some believers resist God and are used for purposes in redemption, but in a utility kind of way. Back in that day the vessels for ignoble use were used for garbage containers and toilets. I don't think any of us want to be used for that in God's house. But, between the lines, I think that's what Paul and the Spirit were thinking about H&P.

As disciples in the harvest, the lines become more distinct if the church is focused on following Christ in the harvest by making disciples, who make disciples. Those who live for themselves and resist growth in Christ begin to stand out. We also find a lot of believers who never fully involve themselves in the harvest, whom God uses incidentally here and there. They are still believers and beloved, but their focus is elsewhere.

Psalms 92-93

Psalm 92

In my Bible it says this is a song for the Sabbath. Imagine taking the day off to reflect on the Lord and enjoy His provision while everyone around you is ignoring this opportunity to slow down and be thankful. I think that thought is held in some of the things said here.

Vs. 1-4 The benefit of taking time to meditate on the Lord was renewing one's trust in God's *steadfast love*, His *faithfulness* and the wonder of the works of His hands. These are all things we need in the rush of life and that we forget in the rush of life.

Vs. 5-9 In meditation there is a sense of perspective, of knowing and understanding the ways and thoughts of God. It puts life on earth in the framework of the plan of God. In the Lord's Prayer it says, *Your kingdom come, your will be done*.

Vs. 10-11 This *fresh oil* is blessing. This person (David?) had been blessed because of his meditation on God during times of danger and stress.

Vs. 12-15 A life lived like this, taking time to go slow and honor God, is summed up in vs. 14 and 15.

This psalm sounds more and more like David. The blessing of meditation on the Lord is that even in old age, there is freshness of heart and mind. And there is the heart willing to testify to the faithfulness of God.

Psalm 93

This is a short song on God's majesty and might, and fits to the Sabbath reflection of the last psalm. It is called an enthronement psalm because it describes the ultimate victory of God, as the Son sits on the throne.

Vs. 1-2 The Lord reigns in majesty, might and everlasting immovability. This is to bring confidence and stability to those who follow Him.

Vs. 3-4 This image of the waters represents all that is chaotic and in rebellion against God. The Lord still reigns above them.

V. 5 God has decreed. We don't understand why things happen, but we trust the Lord and that what He has allowed to be will ultimately work out at the end of the age, to prepare for Him a holy house of faithful followers.

Proverbs 26:3-5

V. 3 I think I can look back and say that when I have gotten the rod, I deserved it for being a fool.

If I understand these verses correctly, they go like this...

V. 4 Do not answer the fool in a foolish, mocking way, lowering yourself to his level.

V. 5 But do make a wise response to a fool to correct and stop what he is doing.