

JEREMIAH 38

RESCUED FROM THE PIT!

Here in this chapter, we find the Lord's prophet exposed to even more sorrows. King Zedekiah had permitted him to be confined in the court of the prison; and it seems that Jeremiah was constantly reiterating, in the ears of all who passed through the court, the message which he had previously delivered to the king. He lost no opportunity of asserting that Jerusalem would surely be given into the hands of the king of Babylon; and as these words passed from lip to lip, they carried dismay throughout the city. No wonder, then, that the princes would demand the death of one who was not only weakening the hands of the people generally, but especially of the men of war – even though his words were true. So they appealed to the king and demanded that the prophet should be put to death; for they affirmed that he did not seek the wellbeing of his people, but their hurt. But this complaint was unjust. Jeremiah was not pressing his own personal opinion, but he was only declaring the word of the Lord – and not from any lack of patriotism, or from personal cowardice. He spoke and acted from a deep feeling of love for his people, in order to avert their complete destruction.

The true friend of the people was the prophet, and surely King Zedekiah knew that; yet he cared not if he was put to death. He allowed himself to be a puppet and a toy in the hands of his princes and court, and yielded to their demands. So the princes threw Jeremiah into a pit in the court of the prison, which was very deep, for they were obliged to let him down into it with cords. It contained no water, yet the bottom of it was muddy mire, into which the prophet sank; and surely he would have died if he had remained there for very long.

But the life of the faithful servant of God was not to end amidst the damp darkness of that hideous tomb. Was there no one to interfere on the prophet's behalf? Yes, God raised up a deliverer for His servant and sent him help, although it was through a very unexpected channel! There was an Ethiopian eunuch in the service of Zedekiah, whose real name is probably unknown to us; for *Ebed-melech* is a Hebrew name that means "the king's servant." Although he was not a Jew by birth, how tender was the compassion which he displayed for the prophet! He hastened to the king, who was sitting at one of the city gates; and he remonstrated with him and urged him to take immediate steps to save the prophet from imminent death. Always swayed by the last strong influence that was brought to bear upon him, the king yielded as easily to his Ethiopian servant as he had just done to his princes. He even told Ebed-melech to take a sufficient number of men to assist him and preserve him from interference, and to immediately rescue the prophet. And this kind-hearted man exercised great

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The princes obtain permission to throw Jeremiah into a deep pit – verses 1-6
- ❖ Ebed-melech gently rescues the prophet from death in the pit – verses 7-13
- ❖ A final interview between Jeremiah and King Zedekiah – verses 14-28

gentleness in the way that he went about doing his errand of mercy. He was not content with merely dragging Jeremiah from the pit's bottom; he thoughtfully lined the rough ropes with old soft rags, which had been fetched hurriedly from the house of the king himself, so that the prophet's flesh was neither cut nor chafed as he was being draw up out of the pit by the ropes.

God Himself took notice of Ebed-melech's noble act; and a short time afterward, He told Jeremiah to assure him that when the city was taken, he would be one of the few who would escape with his life (chapter 39:15-18). From Ebed-melech's deed of love and mercy, we may learn an important lesson. It is not enough to merely serve and help those who need assistance; we must always do it with the sweetness and gentleness of Christ! Many men might have hurried to the pit's edge with ropes, but only one of God's own gentlemen would have thought of making them soft and comfortable with old rags. Is it not very beautiful, when so much is left untold in the Scriptures, that a dozen lines in God's Word should be given to this simple incident of a kind-hearted deliverer intervening in the darkness of the lonely prophet? In Ebed-melech, we may behold a foreshadowing of that One Who came forth from the palace of the Great King, in order to loose the captive's chains and raise him from the miry pit of sin. The cords of our Savior's love and compassion lift us up and restore us to perfect liberty!

After being rescued from the pit, Jeremiah continued to remain in the court of the prison until the city was captured by the Babylonians. And it was probably a few days after his deliverance by Ebed-melech when Zedekiah sent for the prophet yet again – seeking his counsel, although in strict secrecy. Jeremiah told him that he still had an opportunity of saving his own life and sparing his city from destruction by fire – if he would only surrender to the king of Babylon. And he warned him that if he refused to take this opportunity now, it would be his last chance. But alas! These appeals utterly failed. The king did not have the firmness or willingness to obey the Divine command.

Before the king and the prophet parted for the last time, Zedekiah told Jeremiah what he should say if the princes heard of this secret interview and came to question him about it. When they did come to inquire, the prophet answered them as the king had advised, and merely stated that he had begged the king to keep him from returning to certain death in Jonathan's dungeon. No doubt, Jeremiah truly *did* make such a petition during his conversation with the king; surely he would not have passed up such an opportunity of asking for the king's mercy. Therefore, his words were not a lie; they were indeed a part of the truth – which it was lawful for him to put them off with, when he was under no obligation at all to tell them the whole truth.

Lord Jesus, thank You for not merely lowering a rope to rescue our souls from sin's pit – but for even descending into the pit Yourself, in order to carry us out! Amen.

