

A Life of Faith (Jeremiah 32:16–44)

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Introduction

The chapter before us is the first of a pair that presents the second message of hope (the first being the new covenant [Ch. 30, 31]), focusing on the promise of restoration. The promise has a near and a far application as evidenced in verses 38 through 41, which can only apply to the new covenant era. Verses 42 through 44 revert to the current crisis and the return after the Babylonian captivity.

Chapter 33 focuses on the greater promise of the Righteous Branch springing from the Davidic dynasty. David's greater Son would be the King, executing justice and righteousness in the whole earth (vv. 14–16; Psalm 2). The Righteous Branch was previously introduced in Chapter 23:5, 6.

The theme of the text before us is the importance of *a life of faith* and It is God who creates a people for such a life.

I. The Quandary of Faith

1. God's mysterious ways are understood only by faith.

Why did the Lord use judgment and suffering as the backdrop for something good—*hope* as promised in the new covenant? The prophet Habakkuk, like Jeremiah, questioned the circumstances of his nation and times, asking God to remedy Judah's perversion of justice and to remove the threat of the Chaldean invasion. Although Habakkuk did not understand the circumstances, he must know and trust the Lord who was working all things according to His perfect will.

2. None should conclude that troubling circumstances are out of the Lord's control.

The Lord responded to the prophet's concern (Hab. 1:5). The shocking revelation was that it was the Lord Himself who employed the Chaldeans to correct wicked Judah.

3. God uses evil people, evil nations, and evil events to further His righteous plans.

Habakkuk then raised a second problem; how could a righteous God use a wicked nation as a tool to punish His own people? The Lord responded again, declaring that His goal would be that "*The righteous shall live by faith*" (2:4; quoted three times by Paul [Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, and Heb. 10:38]).

The events the prophet questioned were but steps and stages to the realization of the ultimate goal—a *righteous* people who will *live by faith*. Faith is the work of the informed heart trusting the Lord even in the darkness and obeying His will even when it makes no sense. The Lord requires this trust and obedience, and only new-covenant people can truly walk with God in this way.

4. Faith identifies a true saint who trustingly waits on God amidst darkness and uncertainty.

The prophet closed with a prayer/song (3:1). Habakkuk knows the Lord and fears Him. He acknowledges His ways are hard to understand, but he trusts Him implicitly. He ends his prayer with a faith-resolve (3:16). He knows that God will always do right, and justice will prevail. The enemy he dreads will also face God's wrath.

In like manner, Jeremiah chafed at his circumstances, even angry at times for the hard ministry he was forced to endure. This lonely soul was, by faith, forced to know and depend on his faithful, patient God. That fellowship shaped his character and confidence as God intended. The text before us reveals the true nature of one who trusts God enough to walk by faith.

“The secret [counsel] of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant”
(Psalm 25:14).

II. The Conditions of Faith

1. The background of Jeremiah’s quandary

The historical setting finds Jeremiah imprisoned in the court of the guard at the palace of the king Zedekiah, the tenth year of his reign and the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. The Chaldeans besieged Jerusalem, and its destruction was eminent and the enemy would soon take possession of all Judah, including the land of Benjamin. At that time, Jeremiah was given a word from God.

a. A curious revelation with a weird request

The Lord told the prophet that his cousin, Hanamel, would come to him and ask him to purchase a field in his home area of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. Jeremiah was a kinsman-redeemer who had the right of redemption, but why would the Lord want him to purchase the field when the Chaldeans would soon take possession of it?

b. Obedience of faith born of conditioned and close fellowship with God

Jeremiah had reluctantly agreed to his call, which, according to human standards, was doomed to failure at its inception. He told the truth in a culture that wanted only comfortable lies to assure and secure them in dangerous times. The Lord graciously enabled the prophet to persevere and, in his pain, he learned to walk by faith. At this time, Jeremiah had preached God’s truth faithfully for thirty years.

2. Jeremiah’s quiet obedience

a. Jeremiah followed through, purchasing the field in a precise and correct manner, a field he would never possess.

This word of the Lord was likely no more than *an impression* on the prophet’s mind. The proof of this observation is that Hanamel’s coming to him confirmed the impression Jeremiah received. Jeremiah records, *“Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord”* (v. 8b).

b. Jeremiah’s obedience demonstrated faith despite his doubts (Heb. 11:1).

Only after Jeremiah obeyed precisely did he raise his doubts to the Lord. God commands: faith obeys, even when uncertainty shadows it (Rom. 4:20, 21). Jeremiah’s obedience of faith was a foretelling of a glorious future to follow the necessary purging of the unrighteous.

What We Can Conclude

1. Faith obeys God even where questions exist. Faith risks, venturing and daring everything on the Word of God no matter how dark and uncertain the circumstances (2 Cor. 5:7).
2. The faithful soul takes all questions and doubts to the secret place and presents them to God. Questions and doubts are not unbelief unless they cause one to disobey or reject the Lord.
3. Faith knows God and commits all questions and doubts to Him in confidence. *“Nothing is too hard for you”* (v. 17) affirms his confidence in God. But then he questions, *“The city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. ... Yet you, O Lord God, have said to me, ‘Buy the field for money and get witnesses’—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans”* (vv. 24, 25).
4. The Lord always rewards true faith. *“I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God”* (vv. 37, 38).