**Pressed but not Crushed**

**(Jeremiah 38; 2 Corinthians 4:8-17)**

**Yearly Theme: *“Joy is…”***

**Series Title: *“Joy through Loss”***

**July 12th, 2020**

***Something to think about:***

Being a person of integrity requires stick-to-itiveness when the odds are stacked against you. It requires standing your ground when pressures rise. It requires doing the right thing even when everyone else is doing the wrong thing. And, it requires a cool head when standing in the face of persecution and severe opposition.

The prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament is one of these types of people. Though he did lose his cool a time or two, and though he did question God when times got tough, Jeremiah faithfully followed God’s directives even when the whole world was against him.

For our purposes today, we come upon the scene when Jeremiah has been imprisoned by the political leaders under Zedekiah’s rule by being placed in an empty cistern. However, after learning of this one of the royal officers sympathetic to Jeremiah reports to the king and Zedekiah has him brought to the palace for questioning. This is where we pick up the story…

**Turn in your Bibles to: *Jeremiah 38:14-28***

Biblical scholars and theologians, Tremper Longman and Raymond Dillard, in their book, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, write this about Jeremiah the prophet,

“Jeremiah often withstood the political and religious establishment of his day, and, as with many others in the succession of prophets in Israel, he would suffer for it. He was persecuted for his message, whipped, and put in stocks by a temple overseer, accused of treason, sedition, and desertion, plotted against, imprisoned in a cistern, and held under arrest in the courtyard of the guard. The prophet’s own suffering may be in part the background for the intensely personal outcries and prayers commonly called Jeremiah’s ‘confessions.’ The prophet gives expression to feeling abandoned by God or prays that God will take vengeance on his enemies or questions the goodness and constancy of God in the face of his suffering.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Key Point*: “Standing with God will not make you popular with the world, but it will save you from the world.”***

In Jeremiah 38, there are two different characters that we should look at in more detail: *Jeremiah* and *Zedekiah*. Contrasting the two, there are also two different responses to God. Let’s take a closer look…

* **Zedekiah: A man of compromise.**

*Jeremiah 38:19 (NLT), “But I am afraid to surrender,” the king said, “for the Babylonians may hand me over to the Judeans who have defected to them. And who knows what they will do to me!”*

* **Jeremiah: A man of integrity.**

*Jeremiah 38:17-18 (NLT), 17  Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “This is what the LORD God of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘If you surrender to the Babylonian officers, you and your family will live, and the city will not be burned down. 18  But if you refuse to surrender, you will not escape! This city will be handed over to the Babylonians, and they will burn it to the ground.’”*

***Something to take home:***

Great or small, there are things in life that push us to the breaking point. However, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus is the remedy that keeps us from completely breaking in to. Integrity isn’t something that comes easy. It’s something that’s tested time and time again in our lives. Will we do the right thing, or won’t we? Will we stand for God’s will and purposes, or will we buckle under the weight of opposition and pressure? Are we willing to stand alone when the world is against us, knowing that we stand for Christ above all else, or will we take the easy road of compromise and follow the crowd of popular opinion?

We do well to remember the Apostle Paul’s words in his letter to the Corinthian church as words of encouragement for us today:

***2 Corinthians 4:8-18 (NLT), 8  We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. 9  We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. 10  Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.***

***11  Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. 12  So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.***

***13  But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, “I believed in God, so I spoke.” 14  We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. 15  All of this is for your benefit. And as God’s grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.***

***16  That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. 17  For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! 18  So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.***

**Key Point*: “Standing with God will not make you popular with the world, but it will save you from the world.”***

1. Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1994), 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)