

August 31

2 Kings 25:23-26

Jeremiah 40:7-16 / 41:1-44:30 / 51:64

This is High School Pastor Brad Mock bringing you today's accelerator for August 31st! Today we read a few verses out of 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 40:7-44:30.

After reading these passages, I wondered if the people would ever learn. As I read, even though I knew what would happen, I read it with frustration because I really wanted things to turn out differently for Jeremiah. Just once I wanted to read something like this: "And when Jeremiah told them all that the Lord had said to them concerning their questions they said: "We will do exactly as the Lord has said and trust him that the king of Babylon will not blame us for the assassination of Gedaliah. If God says he will bless us, if we stay in the land, then we surely stay and we will trust him!" That's what I wanted Johanan and the people to say but that is not what they said. Once again, Jeremiah found himself compelled by the people to ask God for advice that they had no intention whatever of following even though they swore up and down that they would!! How do you explain that??

In today's reading, we are dealing with exactly the same kinds of stubborn behavior that Zedekiah has so well modeled for us in the days just gone by. We have read so much about this! Jeremiah is contending with people who desperately want God to bless their plans. If he will bless their plans, then everything will be well and good. But, if God has a different idea than they do, then the attitude will quickly become, "Why should I listen to you anyway?" It is not uncommon. You see it everywhere you look not only in the pages of Scripture but in the church of today. If we look carefully enough we are likely to find some subtle forms of the same problem in our own relationship with God. I love taking orders when God is telling me to do what I already think I'd like to do. But, when God is telling me to do something other than what I want, I don't get too excited about that.

I want to marry that person over there. Would that be all right with you God? I really wouldn't want to do something that would displease you so I've come to ask your blessing. I know that she isn't a Christian yet, but she has promised to come to church every week and I know for sure that I'll be able to win her to you over time. What do you mean you've said not to be unequally yoked to unbelievers? Couldn't you make an exception just this once? After all God, I'm really in love and it's not fair that you should let me fall in love if you're not going to bless my marriage to that person. You really blew it God. I would have loved to serve you but since you are being so unreasonable, you can just forget it. By now a few of you may be laughing at me-but believe me I've heard that conversation before. It can take other forms too...

Lord, I've decided to buy this new toy. It's not a necessity, but I work pretty hard and it would sure be nice to have it. I'm praying about this because I want to be sure it's ok with you. I know that you want me to have it so I can be fulfilled. By the way, I think I forgot to tell you that it probably will mean that I can't pledge any money to missions this year. I might put just a little less in the plate but I'm sure you won't mind. After all

some people don't give anything at all. Lord, I can't believe what the guy in my journey group said when I told him what I was planning. The nerve of him to ask me if buying this toy was good stewardship, I'm mad about that. Maybe I should leave that group, I think people there are too judgmental!!!

Zedekiah, Johanan, Mike or Mary, me or you... This method of reasoning is not all that rare. Lord bless me, here's what I have in mind. Be careful- Jeremiah tried to warn Johanan and company and in the end he said, "You made a fatal mistake when you sent me to the Lord your God and said, "Pray to the Lord our God for us and tell us everything he says and we will do it..." Never say that to God unless you really mean it. Don't ever ask God to show you his will unless you are really committed to obeying what he says. If you ask and he shows and you ignore, remember the story of Johanan and his friends. It's a sad one. I wouldn't want to see you relive it.

So the rebellion against God goes on, and the people who are afraid that Nebuchadnezzar will punish them for the evil deeds of others flee down to Egypt. Unbelievably, they force Jeremiah to go with them. So Jeremiah, who has spent nearly his whole lifetime warning the people of God not to rely on Egypt, ends up against his will as an exile in the land of the pharaohs. I can't imagine that he would have been a very welcome guest there. If he was welcome initially, the words of the Lord he spoke shortly after his arrival would certainly have worn out the welcome very quickly, because now, at the command of God he is speaking prophecies against Egypt. His prophecies can be summarized pretty easily. Look out, because Nebuchadnezzar is coming to Egypt and the Lord is sending him here.

It's interesting to think that Nebuchadnezzar, the instrument of God's judgment was anything but a devout follower of the Lord, at least at this point in his life. One of the things that the sovereign Lord of history does is to use men and nations which often have no understanding of the fact that they are his instruments. God often uses unrighteous instruments to accomplish his work but when he is finished he will turn around and judge those instruments according to the same set of scales. They too will feel his righteous wrath. There is one point about this pattern that is worth our noting, just so we will not be surprised by it's truth. It's that judgment usually begins with the people who have the most responsibility before God. That responsibility is with the people who have the greatest knowledge of him, who have experienced the greatest blessing from him, and who of all people ought to know better than to ignore his holiness and despise his grace. That is God's way. Eventually God judged Egypt and Babylon and Rome, but first he judged his own people.

Those of us who are followers of Christ have a big responsibility to carefully consider all we have learned from the history of God's Old Testament people. There is absolutely no reason at all to suspect that God has today done anything at all to change the way he works. If that is true, and if it is also true that God is getting ready once again to pour out righteous judgment on the earth, where do you think that judgment is most likely to begin? What do you think that you and I ought to do about that? Yes- that's what I think as well.

In closing, I think that there is something else that you and I both need to do today. We need to do some soul searching. If the pattern of asking God to bless our plans and then refusing to obey what he really wants us to do is anywhere near as prevalent as I think it is, we need to do some repenting. There is a New Testament passage that fits our situation this morning. Paul reminds us in the communion passage in 1st Corinthians that if we would judge ourselves, then we will not be judged by God. Instead we will have the full assurance of his forgiveness and blessing.

As we end today's accelerator, I want to encourage you to just spend some time in reflection and prayer. I think God has something to say to us in relation to these things.