

Jeremiah 38 – Faithfulness in the Face of Fear

1. The Prophet in the Pit (Jeremiah 38:1–13)

“Now Shephatiah... Gedaliah... Jucal... and Pashhur heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes over to the Chaldeans shall live; his life shall be as a prize to him, and he shall live.’” (Jeremiah 38:1–2)

Jeremiah’s message was clear: Surrender to God’s discipline, and you will live. Resist it, and you will perish.

This was not treason—it was obedience to the word of the Lord. Yet, the princes of Judah accused Jeremiah of weakening morale and demanded his death (Jeremiah 38:4). Tragically, King Zedekiah caved to political pressure and said, *“Behold, he is in your hand”* (Jeremiah 38:5).

So they took God’s prophet, lowered him into a muddy cistern, and left him to die. Scripture says,

“In the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.” (Jeremiah 38:6)

This is one of the lowest moments—literally and figuratively—in Jeremiah’s ministry. The man who had faithfully spoken God’s Word was sinking in a pit of mud, forsaken by his own leaders.

But God never abandons His servants.

An Ethiopian eunuch named Ebed-Melech, a man of faith and courage, intervened. He went to the king and pleaded for Jeremiah’s life. With the king’s reluctant permission, he gathered ropes and old rags and carefully lifted the prophet out of the mire (Jeremiah 38:7–13).

God used a man from outside Israel—an Ethiopian eunuch—to save His prophet when Israel’s own leaders would not.

Practical application:

When we stand for truth in a culture that resists it, we may feel isolated or buried by opposition. But God always has an *Ebed-Melech*—someone willing to step forward and rescue those who suffer for righteousness. The Lord knows how to sustain the faithful, even in the darkest dungeons of life.

“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.” (Psalm 34:17)

If you are in a “pit” today—misunderstood, mistreated, or exhausted—remember Jeremiah. The same God who raised him up will lift you out, too.

2. The King’s Secret Meeting (Jeremiah 38:14–20)

“Then Zedekiah the king sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him... and the king said, ‘I will ask you something. Hide nothing from me.’” (Jeremiah 38:14)

Zedekiah called Jeremiah for another private meeting. He swore an oath not to harm him and begged to hear the truth.

Jeremiah answered without hesitation:

“If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon’s princes, then your soul shall live... and this city shall not be burned. But if you do not surrender... this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire.” (Jeremiah 38:17–18)

The message did not change—it never does. God’s Word remains the same regardless of who listens or who resists.

But notice Zedekiah’s response. He confessed,

“I am afraid of the Jews who have defected to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand.” (Jeremiah 38:19)

Zedekiah’s problem was not ignorance—it was fear. He feared people more than he feared God. Jeremiah reassured him that if he would simply trust and obey the Lord, he would be spared (Jeremiah 38:20).

Practical application:

Many people are like Zedekiah. They believe God’s Word in private but are afraid to stand for it in public. They know what is right but fear the opinions of others.

“The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.” (Proverbs 29:25)

Faith demands courage. God’s will is always best, but it often requires bold obedience. Like Zedekiah, we must decide whether we will live by fear or by faith.

3. The Consequences of Disobedience (Jeremiah 38:21–23)

“But if you refuse to surrender, this is the word that the Lord has shown me: ‘Now behold, all the women who are left in the king of Judah’s house shall be surrendered to the king of Babylon’s princes, and those women shall say:

Your close friends have set upon you and prevailed against you;

Your feet have sunk in the mire,

And they have turned away again.’” (Jeremiah 38:21–22)

Jeremiah warned that if Zedekiah disobeyed, humiliation and destruction would follow. Even the women of the palace would mock him, saying his advisors had betrayed him.

If Zedekiah continued in fear, his entire family and kingdom would fall, and Jerusalem would be burned (Jeremiah 38:23).

God’s warnings are never idle threats; they are opportunities to repent before it’s too late. Sadly, Zedekiah still refused to trust God.

Practical application:

When we persist in disobedience, we not only harm ourselves but also those around us.

Our choices have ripple effects—spiritual, relational, and eternal.

Sin always promises safety but ends in bondage.

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” (Proverbs 14:12)

4. Jeremiah's Integrity and Silence (Jeremiah 38:24–28)

“Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, ‘Let no one know of these words, and you shall not die.’... Then all the princes came to Jeremiah and asked him, and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded.” (Jeremiah 38:24–27)

The king begged Jeremiah to keep their conversation secret. When the princes questioned him, Jeremiah replied with part of the truth—he said he had only asked not to be sent back to the dungeon. It was technically true, though incomplete.

Jeremiah's restraint here was not deceitful but wise. He had no obligation to reveal private counsel to corrupt leaders. Scripture later shows that God honored Jeremiah's faithfulness, not condemning his prudence.

“So Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken.” (Jeremiah 38:28)

Even in confinement, Jeremiah stayed faithful to God's Word until the end.

Practical application:

Faithfulness to God is not measured by outward success but by inward obedience. Jeremiah's ministry looked like failure—he was rejected, beaten, and imprisoned—but in God's eyes, he was a victor.

“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” (First Corinthians 4:2)

A Challenge for Believers

Are you more like Jeremiah or Zedekiah?

- Jeremiah spoke truth even when it cost him everything.
- Zedekiah knew the truth but refused to act on it.

It is not enough to know God's will; we must obey it.

In a world filled with compromise and fear, God is calling His people to stand firm on His Word, no matter the cost.

Let us pray for courage like Jeremiah—to speak truth in love, to endure suffering with faith, and to trust that God's purposes will prevail even when circumstances seem hopeless.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

This chapter is also a warning and an invitation.

Like Zedekiah, you may have heard God's Word but delayed responding. You may be afraid of what others will think if you follow Jesus. But postponing obedience is still disobedience—and it has consequences.

The same God who warned Judah is calling you today. He loves you deeply, but your sin separates you from Him. The Bible says:

- *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23)
- *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
(Romans 6:23)

Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross to pay for your sin. He took your judgment so that you could receive His forgiveness and eternal life.

Then He rose from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

He is offering you mercy today—the same mercy Zedekiah rejected.

If you will surrender to Him, you will be forgiven, cleansed, and made new.

You can pray right now:

“Lord Jesus, I believe that You died for my sins and rose again. I turn from my sin and surrender my life to You. Please forgive me, cleanse me, and make me new. I confess that You are my Savior and my Lord. Help me to follow You all my days. Amen.”

If you prayed that sincerely, God has heard you, and He welcomes you into His family.

Conclusion: God’s Word Stands Forever

Jeremiah 38 reminds us that God’s Word cannot be silenced, His truth cannot be buried, and His servants are never forgotten.

Jeremiah was faithful in the pit. Zedekiah was fearful in the palace. Which one do you resemble?

God is still calling His people to faithfulness in a fearful world. Stand firm. Speak truth. Trust God. And remember—Jesus Christ has already conquered sin and death. His resurrection is proof that the faithful will never be forsaken.

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:8)