

The Persecuted Prophet

Right now, let's look to the Lord in prayer. Father, I thank you for this opportunity of looking into Your Word. I pray that You would touch each of our hearts today with Your Word, and may we heed what You have for us today. Speak to that person today, Lord, who is in need. Help that person, Lord, to be lifted up, strengthened, and encouraged today. Save that soul, Lord, that's nearest Hell. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In Jeremiah Chapter 18, we read of the prophet Jeremiah, and all through this book of Jeremiah, we read of a prophet who actually was having a rough time. He didn't understand everything that God was doing, and God was doing this. He was telling Jeremiah that His people, the people of Israel, needed to turn their hearts around and turn back to Him, God, in order for them to be blessed. Well, Jeremiah was being persecuted by the people of Israel, and he just couldn't understand some things that were going on in his life.

It seemed that the people were being blessed and he was being cursed, as such, which he wasn't really, but they were prospering and he wasn't prospering. And how often we look at ourselves today in our lives and we just sort of feel sorry for ourselves and don't understand that God is still on the throne and God is still in control of our lives and this world.

In Jeremiah Chapter 18, reading with verse 1, the Bible says: *¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ²Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. ³Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. ⁴And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of*

the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. ⁵Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁶O house of Israel... Now, God is giving Jeremiah instruction here to tell this to the house of Israel. ⁶O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

Now, we want to look very briefly today at lives made over. God is a god of mercy, grace, and patience. And thank God for that. Jeremiah was down in the dumps. He was terribly discouraged and disappointed, and his heart was cut deeply. He felt like quitting and giving up. And the reason he felt this way was that his people were marred by backsliding, sins, failures, and moral breakdown. Does that sound familiar? Sounds somewhat like we're going through today in our land. The great Jeremiah got his eyes on people. Things around him were dark.

Jeremiah wasn't the first to get his eyes on people. And we look in the Bible and we see several instances of God's people who look to the people instead of looking to God. I think, first of all, of David. The Bible teaches us that David was a man after God's own heart. David was the one who killed the giant, and later, he cried, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." He started looking at things instead of looking toward God. He started looking at fear. He was fearing for his life. Now, we've all been there. We all fear at one time or another, but David was a man who stood for God. He killed Goliath, the giant. He did several things in the sight of God that pleased God, and then, all of a sudden, it seemed like he lost his courage. He said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of

Saul.” And we realize, of course, as we study the Bible that David did not perish by the hand of Saul.

And then we see Elijah on Mount Carmel. He stood with God and defeated 850 false prophets, the false prophets of Baal and the false prophets of the grove. He actually defeated these people single-handedly, and, of course, we know that it was God who really defeated these prophets, but it was Elijah who stood his ground with God on that mountain.

And then we see later on that he ran from Jezebel. He was afraid. Jezebel said, “Because you’ve done these things...” Now, all that Elijah was doing as we read and study in the Old Testament, all he did was prophesy the Word of God just as Jeremiah was doing here all through the book of Jeremiah. And the prophet Elijah got the blame or he was credited with what was going wrong in the land of Israel at that time that Jezebel was in, and Jezebel said, “Just because you’re doing this to us, I’m going to kill you.” Well, Elijah ran and he was down in the dumps and he was looking to people instead of looking to God.

And then we see John the Baptist. Well, what happened with John the Baptist? He stood courageous before Herod. He was the one who stood up and said, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” but there came a time in his life when he asked this question: “Art thou He or should we look for another?” He sent word to Jesus. He said, “Jesus, are You the one we’re looking for? Or should we look to another?” In other words, it seemed that his faith was faltering. And, of course, we know that later on John the Baptist paid with his life. He actually gave his life for the Lord Jesus, for God, and we see that his life ended up as one who stood upon the Word, who stood for God.

Every one of us has had problems at one time or another in our lives, and we seem to sometimes look at man and we get scared. But our faith and our trust needs to be put in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, look with me now at lives made over. God has a plan for every life. Just as He has a plan for my life, He has a plan for your life. It makes no difference how young or how old you are. God has a plan for you just as the potter had a plan for the vessel in our Scripture today in Chapter 18 of Jeremiah. We never know what God is getting ready to do for us and through us.

Moses was in the palace. Now, no doubt, he didn’t realize what God had in store for him, but we read the Scriptures and understand that all of the male children would be killed. All the babies were to be sacrificed in that land, but through the providential grace of God, we see that Moses was actually raised in that palace, and he was raised by Pharaoh’s daughter. Actually, his mother... God arranged it so Moses’ actual mother could raise him. So, when Moses grew up, he realized that he was a Jew, so therefore, God could use him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. God made his life over. He turned him from being in the house of Pharaoh to leading His people, the Jewish nation, out of the land of Pharaoh out of Egypt.

And then we see how that Joseph... the devil meant it for harm, but God turned it out for the best. His brothers sold him into captivity. He was taken down to Egypt. He was favored above people in Egypt and then he got into trouble with his master’s wife. His master’s wife accused him of trying to sexually assault her and he was cast into prison. The devil meant it for harm, but Joseph was in that prison. Joseph came out of that prison, and we see that through God’s faithfulness that He prolonged, that He helped Joseph, helped his

brothers, helped his father, thereby sustaining the people of Israel.

Now, God sent Jeremiah down to the potter's house where a potter was molding a vessel, but it was marred in the potter's hands. Notice with me in Jeremiah 20:9. Jeremiah was confused. He didn't know what to do. He had once again gotten his eyes off of God and got it on people, and he said, "God, why are You doing these things to me?" He said, "I'm just going to quit." And in Jeremiah 20:9, it says, *Then I said, I will not make mention of him...* That's God. Jeremiah said, "I'm not going to say anything else about Him or for Him..." *nor speak any more in his name.* And notice what he said: *But his word... God's Word... was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.* He said, "God's Word was burning within me and I could not stop. I could not help but proclaim God."

And that's the way it is with us today who know Jesus Christ. If we know Him, it's burning. It's burning within us that we share Jesus with this lost and dying world. Though men are marred by sin, God can mold them over again.

And notice something else about God's plan. God's plan can be marred but not stopped. We may choose to disobey God. God is not a tyrant who says, "You're going to do this and do that and everything that I say and there's nothing you can do about it." But that's not true. God gives us a free will. We can see and look around us today that a nation can mar God's plan, but it can't stop it. We can see that a church may mar God's plan, but God's plan cannot be stopped. A home can mar God's plan, but we look and we understand that God's plan cannot be stopped. God's purpose and plan will be carried out through the ages.

And finally, we see that God has a wheel just as the potter did to make our lives over. And what a glorious thing it is today that we can trust in a God who loves us so much that He can take us and He give us a second chance. The Lord takes the same clay that has been marred and remakes it. It means a second chance. God wants to help you today. If you know Him as your Savior and you've turned from Him, it doesn't mean you're lost. It simply means that you've turned from Him and you're out of fellowship. You need to come back to the Lord and serve Him today. God is willing to take your life... It makes no difference what you've done... He's willing to take your life and make it over again.

And if you've never trusted Jesus as your Savior, let me invite you to do so right now. You can pray something like this, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart. I'm sorry for my sin. Please help me. Save my soul so that I can go to Heaven." If you'll pray a prayer like that, Jesus will save you today because the Bible says, *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

And if you're saved today and you need to confess your sin before God to get back in right relationship with Him, simply bow your head and say, "Lord, I'm sorry. Please help me to live for You. I promise today to give my life totally to You. In Jesus' name."

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Until next time, this is Doug Anderson reminding you it's a good life living for the Lord. May the Lord bless you richly is our prayer.