

Monday, 27 February 2017 Jeremiah 39:16-18

"Go, and say to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will fulfill my words against this city for harm and not for good, and they shall be accomplished before you on that day. But I will deliver you on that day, declares the LORD, and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. For I will surely save you, and you shall not fall by the sword, but you shall have your life as a prize of war, because you have put your trust in me, declares the LORD.'"

Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch in the court of King Zedekiah, was the individual who protested Jeremiah's incarceration in a cistern, an act of kindness to the prophet. As a result of his obedience, he was promised that he would escape the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

Does not the LORD often reward His people today when they are obedient. Not necessarily, even rarely, with material rewards, but the righteousness, peace and joy of a life lived in communion with Him.

Tuesday, 28 February 2017 Lamentations 4:11-12

The LORD gave full vent to his wrath; he poured out his hot anger, and he kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations. The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

How long will the LORD withhold His hot anger? When will that consuming fire break out against those in this country who claim to be followers of the Way, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet live lives of deliberate and willful disobedience, defying His clear statement that we honor Him and love our neighbors. We are masters of the art of clever sophistry as we build excuses for ignoring His Commandments. And we expect cheap grace to save our darling hides.

Not so!!

Wednesday, 1 March 2017 Ezekiel 5:5-9

"Thus says the Lord GOD: This is Jerusalem. I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. And she has rebelled against my rules by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries all around her; for they have rejected my rules and have not walked in my statutes. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you are more turbulent than the nations that are all around you, and have not walked in my statutes or obeyed my rules, and have not even acted according to the rules of the nations that are all around you, therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, even I, am against you. And I will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again.

This is the Word of the LORD, God, the Almighty against His chosen people and repeated several times by Ezekiel with minor variations in

the course of this book. Keep in mind that he is commenting on about a millennium of Israel's history that brought the LORD to such a state of fury.

Compare this to the state of the Christian church as it was in 1950 (slightly less than my lifetime) and as it is now. We have been silent as 60,000,000+ citizens have been legally murdered, divorce is as prevalent among the Church as in the surrounding secularist culture, pornography, alcoholism, and drugs are addictions that are overwhelming, the Sabbath is honored more for sporting events than worship, the Lord's name has become a throw away expletive, we mix and stir our worship with attractive modifications taken from other god's worship, we have begun to modify our laws to allow the euthanasia of the elderly and infirm, greed, lust, lying, covetousness, and stealing are rampant. We worship self rather than the LORD, God, the Almighty.

Will He withhold His hand? Read that last sentence of the passage again and again. It should strike terror into our hearts. Are we counting on cheap grace to buy off the LORD's wrath. Remember, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* Hebrews 10:31

Thursday, 2 March 2017 Ezekiel 37:22-28

And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."

Seven times in this passage, the LORD, God, the Almighty says, "I will..." and He means it. No wiggle words, flat statements of fact. His grace, His mercy come together to enable that awesome and thunderous "I will..." His gift of the Comforter brings me into a state of obedience where I can enjoy His company.

Friday, 3 March 2017 Daniel 3:28

Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

Daniel 6:23

Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Two precious stories, favorites among Sunday School teachers, but powerful examples of the results of trust/belief/commitment/obedience.

But I have to ask about the hordes of Christians who have been martyred in my lifetime. I am convinced that those 21 young Copts faced their executioners with the same faith that sustained those young Jews. The only answer is, "The LORD knows."

Saturday, 4 March 2017 Daniel 9:15-19

And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. "O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name."

What a magnificent prayer of contrition and repentance. Daniel throws himself and his people fully upon the great mercy of the LORD. No excuses, no blaming others for Judah's sin, it is their and their father's sins that has caused Jerusalem to become a byword among the nations.

How much guilt must the Church bear for our lack of obedience and blatant hypocrisy? If we are unwilling to walk the talk, we have caused the Name to be despised among the nations.

Lord's Day, 5 March 2017 Psalm 119:145

With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep your statutes.

"With my whole heart" With all my being! Holding nothing back! All I am is Yours and is dedicated to Your service! But, Lord, it is a case of, "I believe, help me in my unbelief" I long for Your answers that illuminate my sin and guide me into righteousness.

VOICES TOGETHER

Daily Meditations from the Scriptures



February 27-March 5, 2017

Prayer of the week, based on Paul's prayer in: Romans 15:30-33

Lord Jesus Christ, we come to you as a small band of saints, joined in common struggle to bring an understanding of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of Heaven to those who claim to know You, but don't and to those who deny You. We pray that our ministries will be protected from attacks by unbelievers and by the misalignment of the established church.

Lord, we also pray that each of us will find great encouragement and joy in Your service; that our hearts will be filled with an outpouring of praise and thanksgiving as we revel in the righteousness, peace and joy that is life in Your Kingdom.

Amen

Creational Theology hint for the week--A large dead maple across the street, serving as a feeding station for Pileated Woodpeckers. What a magnificent display of God's provision.

Voices Together is published daily on the website of the Fellowship of Ailbe, www.ailbe.org; along with material by other writers to encourage and assist in our walks as disciples of Jesus Christ. These messages can also be received as daily emails or in a monthly printed version by sending a request to: Pastor John Nunnikhoven, The Church at Prison, Inc. PO Box 8318, Essex Junction, VT 05452

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Realizing the presence, promise and power
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