

## “What Sayeth You? Jeremiah: Patience to Perseverance”

Scripture: Jeremiah 28:1-9

Graphics: prophets, enemies, yoke,

Big Truth: The prophets of the Old Testament were instructed by God, sometimes begrudgingly, to speak God’s truth to His chosen people. They were not always received well and received persecution. Yet, they spoke truth and called the people back to faithful worship and action. Their call was for repentance, rejection of idol worship, love for God, and return to worship of the One True God, Yahweh. In our lives, we are called back to true faith and action, worship and prayer, healing and wholeness during every season of our lives, even the times of lament.

Focus Phrase: Trusting God with the outcome gives me patience and perseverance in my current circumstance.

### 1. Introduction

- A. There’s a lot of wisdom from God in the words of the Old Testament prophets. That’s why we’ve been hearing from those prophets over the past three weeks in this What Sayeth You? series.
- B. The words of the prophets are included so prominently in the Bible for a good reason. That reason is so that the directions and corrections from our holy God to His people don’t get forgotten over time and distance.
- C. The prophets were men and women through whom God spoke His desires and commands. Being a prophet was not easy, to say the least. It required:
  - i. a spiritual connection to God to be able to understand God’s word,
  - ii. a careful listening ear and heart to get the message right,
  - iii. a bold courage to speak the words to the people, and,
  - iv. perseverance and patience to endure the backlash from the people, and sometimes from God.
- D. Nope. Being a prophet was not easy.
- E. Yet, God used the prophets to not only keep His people on track for worship, prayer, community, and telling the work about Him, but to call them back when they were unfaithful and turned to other gods.
- F. Importantly, for us, they were also used by God to tell about the coming Messiah - Jesus Christ - so that the world would be ready to receive Him as Lord and Savior. For thousands of years, from Creation until Jesus was born, the prophets were like mid-wives, preparing the people for Jesus.
- G. Two key words that come to mind - and our focus for today - when waiting for the birth of a child are **patience and perseverance**. Our daughter-in-law Brianna is becoming great with child. We anticipate our second grandchild - a GIRL - to be born in September. But we know, for Brianna and Ben, this process is one of patience and perseverance.

- H. The prophet who will speak to us today is the same one we met last week: **Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet**. In this text today, however, Jeremiah wasn't lamenting nor complaining nor even weeping. In today's writing from Jeremiah, he had a very clear message to the people of God who are in exile in Babylon: "Be patient and persevere as you wait for the peace to come."
- I. So far, in this What Sayeth You series, the prophet Hosea told the people to "repent in order to heal." Moses told the people that "they have been freed in order to be faithful to God alone." Jeremiah told the Israelites to "lament well but quickly move to praising God, even in your lament."
- J. In today's scripture, things have changed since we last checked in with Jeremiah in chapter 20. In 597BC, which is chronologically after last week's writing, the people of Israel were invaded and taken into captivity in Babylon, by King Nebuchadnezzar. While they were in exile, Jeremiah had a message for the exiles.
- K. We might summarize it like this: All your life is under God's control, even your current circumstance, and He will give you patience and perseverance as He works it out for His glory and your good.
- L. In your notes, you can write it this way: **Trusting God with the outcome gives me patience and perseverance in my current circumstance.**
- M. That doesn't mean we won't have difficult times and it doesn't mean that people in our lives won't try to tell us what to do that might counter what God says. What that DOES mean is that God is sovereign over it all and will direct our path when we trust Him in the waiting.
- N. Let's pray and then dive into this passage from Jeremiah.
- O. PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**
- P. Jeremiah 28, starting in verse 1...What Sayeth You, Jeremiah?

## 2. Scripture

- A. **READ Jeremiah 28:1-9**
- B. If we just look at the first nine verses on Jeremiah 28, without looking at any other context, we might get the impression that Jeremiah and the prophet Hananiah were working together to **encourage the people of Israel**. The Israelites had been taken into captivity in 597BC, were far from home, and were slaves in foreign Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar. So Hananiah said to the people, "It'll all be over soon!"
- C. However, if you scan back just a bit, you'll find out two things from chap. 27:
  - i. **First**, God clearly told Jeremiah that the Babylonians were being used by God as a tool to get the Israelites attention in order to reorient them back to God. God was calling them to repentance and healing...to woo them back

to being faithful to God alone...to invite them to lament and praise God for all He was doing, even if it was difficult.

- ii. But the **second thing** we learn is that **Hananiah was a false prophet**. He told the people that God was going to destroy the Babylonian King and bring the people back from exile in **two years**, which wasn't God's plan.
- D. Jeremiah was the true prophet who told them it would take **70 years** - 2-3 generations - in exile to accomplish God's will for them. AND, that God was using the Babylonians as the WAY to bring His people back to Him.
- E. Now, as we read that, it's really hard to hear. It's hard to think that our loving God would use a pagan King and pagan people to correct His people...the people that God called and set apart to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation - His treasured possession. (that's what Moses told them they were!)
- F. But isn't that precisely why God would go to these lengths? To show them that they ARE His treasured possession?
- G. That's why God tasked Jeremiah with this **true message**. It came from God himself. If you remember last week Jeremiah saying, "If I say, 'I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,' then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot." Jeremiah was a messenger with a **burden** to speak for God.
- H. Have you ever seen a **yoke**?
  - i. Not an egg yolk, but a yoke - something that gets placed on oxen so that the burden of the load being hauled can be distributed onto their shoulders.
  - ii. Jeremiah had a yoke on him from God to speak FOR God. But God also placed a yoke on the Israelites in exile - a burden of slavery and forced labor for a season so that the people would know it was God's doing.
  - iii. This yoke on Jeremiah and the people was a symbol of Judah's submission to Babylon. God placed this yoke on them for their own good. That yoke wasn't coming off. That yoke was God's sovereign plan for the people.
- I. So, then, what's the deal with false-prophet-Hananiah? He came into the story in our reading today with a different message than Jeremiah's. Hananiah prophesied that God would break the yoke of the king of Babylon. And within two years, the people would be set free and return home.
- J. That's great! Except, it was a false prophecy. What Hananiah was saying was giving the people false hope that their captivity would end soon. "It'll all be ok. You'll be home soon. Don't worry. Just wait for it. Don't do anything you're being told to do because God's got this."
- K. Jeremiah heard all that Hananiah was saying. Jeremiah's reply, in verse 6 was this, "Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord fulfill the words that you

have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles.”

- L. See, Jeremiah WANTED SO BADLY for Hananiah to be right. He wanted the exile to end and the gold and silver holy items from the Temple that Babylon stole along with the people, to be returned. Jeremiah was human. He had a tender heart. He wanted his friends to come home.
- M. **BUT! That wasn't God plan!** God told Jeremiah, clearly, that all the people of the entire region would be exiles under the rule and reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. The people were in a tough spot. They looked to the prophets to tell them what would happen.
- N. But Jeremiah was the true prophet with the true yoke from God. How do we know that? Precisely because what Jeremiah told them **came true** and what Hananiah prophesied did NOT.
- O. Patrick D. Miller wrote, “The point of the yoke was that neither rebellion nor false hopes of miraculous rescue is the order of the day.”
- P. I agree! The point of the yoke was that God was in control and had a plan...70 years in exile before they returned home to Jerusalem. Here are the implications of that:
  - i. #1 - God is sovereign over all the earth, all nations, and can use them and direct them as He chooses. God is God and we are not.
  - ii. #2 - God used King Nebuchadnezzar as He chose in order to directly accomplish His will.
  - iii. #3 - The nations were to serve Babylon faithfully during exile, and,
  - iv. #4 - Don't listen to the other prophets who think this could be avoided, giving you false hope for the immediate future.
- Q. What Sayeth You, Jeremiah? *“God will use the Babylonians to re-orient your lives back to Him. Be patient and persevere, serving the foreign King well. And after 70-years, God will bring you back home.”*

### 3. Application

- A. The difference between Jeremiah's message and Hananiah's message was that the people needed to trust God so much more with what Jeremiah said. Hananiah meant well - to encourage and give hope - but Jeremiah had the truth.
- B. When you're in the midst of a season of struggle - maybe a lifetime - where do you turn for truth? Do you turn to the latest self-help books? Do you turn to your friends and family on social media? The secular media? Do you turn to other sources that might give you quick and easy optimism?
- C. **Or do you turn to God and His word?**

- D. Now, don't get me wrong. The people that love you may have good advice to give...maybe they've even been where you are. We can listen and take notes.
- E. But the source of truth - that will give you true patience and perseverance - for the followers of Jesus **comes from God alone**. God knows you and I better than we can ever know ourselves.
- F. If I know that some pain or some hardship will only last for a moment, like a shot in the arm or ripping a bandaid off, then I'm way more willing to endure the pain for that brief moment in my own strength. But if I know that there's something in my life that can't be fixed overnight - a relationship struggle, a loved one in trouble, an on-going spiritual battle with sin - it's harder to just grit my teeth and bear it. That's when you and I have to trust God.
- G. It's in the act of trusting God for the outcome that you and I must pray for patience and perseverance. It may not come in 2 years...it may be 70 years. That whole time, we're called to be faithful to God in the midst of the waiting.
- H. If God allows the yoke to be placed on you for a season, there's a reason for it. That yoke is God's way of reminding you who you are to trust with your life. That yoke can be physical, alerting you to something that needs to be addressed. That yoke can be emotional, prompting you to find healing and wholeness. That yoke is often a spiritual burden that turns you away from sin or apathy and towards a holy God who is jealous for your attention.
- I. Jesus said it like this, "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?'" (Matthew 16:24)
- J. Jesus knew how to trust God when the yoke of salvation was placed on him. It required patience so God could work the plan. It required perseverance to know what was coming and yet stay strong to teach and love those around him.
- K. But Jesus also said this, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)
- L. If you feel like you're carrying a heavy load - turn to Jesus and let him carry it while you patiently persevere. Pray for God to bring peace and be faithful to Him in worship, prayer, serving, and healing.
- M. If you are not in a season of exile or struggle right now, then praise God. But **PRAY** for those who **ARE** in that season...God is still in control and we are the ones who are called to intercede in prayer for them...for patience and perse-

verance...for God's yoke to be lifted in His timing...for each one to learn and grow by being faithful and true to God's word.

- N. God uses every circumstance in our lives to teach us more about Him and about ourselves. You can thrive right where you are, as God gives you patience and perseverance.
- O. Trusting God with the outcome gives me patience and perseverance in my current circumstance.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- A. What Sayeth You, Jeremiah?
- B. Jeremiah knew that peace would come eventually and that God would bring them home.
- C. His message to us is this: trust in God for every outcome. Be patient and persevere in times of struggle and pain, for God will not leave you there. Follow the One who made it all and who will use your circumstances to grow you and make you stronger for His glory.
- D. Imagine a church that, together, trusts in what God is doing and we can pray, praise, and serve Him, as we continue to do everything He calls us to do!
- E. As we come to this Table, rejoice for God is in control and Jesus gave the final word for you salvation - your rescue! Peace HAS come! Praise God!
- F. What Sayeth YOU?
- G. Let's pray...