

**Jeremiah 39: 1-18; “Acts of Recompense & Reward”, Sermon # 45 in the series –**  
**“Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”,**  
**Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020,**  
**in the Morning Worship Service.**

We have come this morning to the place where we clearly see the Righteous acts of God in judgment and mercy in relation to all men. And we are meant to apply it to ourselves. This is a chapter which shows God’s recompense and reward. God’s judgments upon unrepentant people begin in this life, and they do not end in eternity. As terrible as the events of this chapter are, it is still worse after death for all who will not repent. So too, God’s mercy and grace begin in this life and they do not end forever for those who put their trust in Jesus Christ. There is the reward of the righteous for their faith, and there is the recompense of the wicked for their unbelief and their evil deeds.

We want to learn today what God is really like. We want to behold His Righteous Acts of Justice and Mercy; His Righteous Acts of rewarding people according to their works. Our God acts with a perfectly righteous and deliberate wisdom when He brings judgments upon unrepentant sinners, and when He rewards the faith of the Righteous. O that we will regard Him as our Glorious God; the One whose work is perfect and whose mercy is sure. There are 3 Major Acts of Recompense and Reward which are pictured for us in the lives of 3 men in this passage. The 1<sup>st</sup> is this:

**The Righteous Act of Judgment upon Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem.**

(verses 1-10)

Why is it that people will heed the warnings of God in the Scripture? Why did Zedekiah and the majority of the people wait until it was too late to repent? Why do people do the same thing today? It is because they really do not believe in the judgment of God. They believe that somehow God accepts them in their sin; just as they are. Zedekiah was told by Jeremiah many times, even up until just shortly before the city was taken, that if he would repent, if he would surrender, he would be spared further judgment. Finally, all of God’s words had their fulfillment. A year and a half after the siege of the city began, the city was penetrated. Let me say, to begin with, that Judgment is like an armed warrior pounding on the door of your life if you have not put your trust in Jesus Christ.

God’s judgment is upon all who suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness. All who hear God’s word and do nothing to heed it shall lose everything that is presently precious to them. If you will turn over to Ezekiel 12: 1-13, I will show this to you. “Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ‘Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, which has eyes to see but does not see, and ears to hear but does not hear; for they are a rebellious house.’ “Therefore, son of man, prepare your belongings for captivity, and go into captivity by day in their sight.” “You shall go from your place into captivity to another place in their sight.” “It may be that they will consider, though they are a rebellious house.” “By day you shall bring out your belongings in their sight, as though going into captivity; and at evening you shall go in their sight, like those who go into captivity.”

“Dig through the wall in their sight, and carry your belongings out through it.” “In their sight you shall bear them on your shoulders and carry them out at twilight; you shall cover your face, so that you cannot see the ground, for I have made you a sign to the house of Israel.” “So I did as I was commanded.” “I brought out my belongings by day, as though going into captivity, and at evening I dug through the wall with my hand.” “I brought them out at twilight, and I bore them on my shoulder in their sight.” “And in the morning the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, ‘What are you

doing?” “Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are among them.’ “Say, ‘I am a sign to you.’ “As I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall be carried away into captivity.”

“And the prince who is among them shall bear his belongings on his shoulder at twilight and go out” “They shall dig through the wall to carry them out through it.” “He shall cover his face, so that he cannot see the ground with his eyes.” “I will also spread My net over him, and he shall be caught in My snare.” “I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there.” “I will scatter to every wind all who are around him to help him, and all his troops; and I will draw out the sword after them.” “Then they shall know that I am the LORD, when I scatter them among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries.” “But I will spare a few of their men from the sword, from famine, and from pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the Gentiles wherever they go.” “Then they shall know that I am the LORD.”

Ezekiel is already in captivity, but the people of the captivity think that Zedekiah has it made; that he will escape judgment. So Ezekiel is told to act out what will happen to Zedekiah. He, the great king of Israel, would be forced to flee Jerusalem in shame, not wanting to be identified. He takes all of his “valuable” possessions with him. But God would spread his net over him, and he would be caught in God’s snare. Do you see the futility of running from God, of trusting in your own wisdom and strength and righteousness? The greatest of men will not escape judgment; the richest of men will not escape with their wealth. All of their beloved possessions; their houses, the means of transportation; their boats, everything that they had at that time that was valuable to them, would be lost. They would lose the whole city.

And what is worse, because Zedekiah would not listen to God’s words, he also lost his family. In chapter 38, verse 23 of our text in Jeremiah, it says – “So they shall surrender all your wives and children to the Chaldeans.” Zedekiah’s unbelieving, unrepentant heart was responsible for the death of all of his sons and the forced subjection of his wives. Zedekiah was only 32 years old when this happened. He was forced to watch all of his sons die before his eyes, at the hands of cruel Nebuzaradan. They were, no doubt not very old; probably younger than 14 years of age; perhaps some of them even very young children or infants. And after this awful spectacle, he also had to watch the nobles of Judah being put to death. And after that, his own eyes were gouged out.

All of these awful things came to him because he would not listen and heed Jeremiah’s words from the Lord to him, and he would not repent of his unbelief and his many sins. And because he was the king, he was leading all of the people under him, to suffer the consequences of their unbelief; their disbelief of God’s words. It is the righteous act of God to bring judgment upon each one of us and upon our nation, if we will not listen to God’s word. It should be understood by us, and we should preach it to others, that when we destroy everything that is good by our sins, we dishonor God who made us for His glory. We hurt and ruin the lives of other people; our own children, our own wife, if we will not have dealings with God over our sins.

Which sins, you say. Sins of sensuality and pride, sins of anger and greed, sins of covetousness, and self-seeking; any of these, or all of these that you will not repent of them, will bring the judgment of God upon you. He will cast every unrepentant person into hell on the final Day, the Day of Judgment. A sinful unrepentant heart will bring you to a state of judicial blindness, where you will have to behold the consequences of your sins in the ruined lives of your dearest relations and friends. And so, you see, God has given you, up until this time, space to repent. Before it is too late, you must act to turn away from these sins.

You say – I will lose many earthly things that are of value to me if I repent. No, God, as Jeremiah told Zedekiah, will enrich your life with the true riches if you repent. And He is well able to supply you with new vineyards and fields like the poor people of the land, in verse 10 of

our text. The poor people of the land are a picture of those who are poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They are a picture of the blessed meek who shall inherit the earth. The Christian loses sinful things now, but they will gain righteous things when they repent, and they will inherit everything good and lasting in the future. It is only the unbelieving and the careless who will lose everything. They seem to have it all now; they are rich in earthly things now, and they cling to selfishly living for the world now. They are like Passion in Pilgrim's Progress. They would have all now, but they will lose what they have entirely when they die.

Will you not try to think of what it mean then ten thousand years from now in hell, to have had much in this life? It will be very painful to you. All that was satisfying and pleasurable in this life; all that has been gone for that amount of time, and it is only a vague and gnawing memory. But listen to Matthew 16: 25-27. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?" "Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."

**2<sup>nd</sup> – The Righteous Acts of God, of recompense and reward, are seen in God's mercy shown to Jeremiah in the time of judgment.** (verses 11-14)

I think that sometimes you must wonder why it is that I am taking you through this book which has so much judgment in it. It is not only that you might behold the desolations and punishments that sin brings, but it is to show you the exceeding greatness of God's power towards His people in such times. I want to attempt to convey to you God's faithfulness to watch over you and care for you in the midst of great difficulties. It is His many mercies which are displayed in such times of great calamity, that we must come to understand. For we may go through such times. God may withdraw His common grace, and His blessing of peace from a nation or a society. He may pour out His righteous wrath on the unrepentant, but God will never cease to do good to those who belong to Him.

Jeremiah was being held in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken. And when the city was taken, God saw to it through Nebuchadnezzar, that Jeremiah was treated well. Nebuchadnezzar gave orders to Nebuzaradan, whose name means "the prince of the killers", the prince of the executioners, to treat Jeremiah well. This horrible man who supervised the killing of Zedekiah's sons and had Zedekiah's eyes gouged out, now is instructed to take Jeremiah and look after him and do him no harm. He sends word to the Rabsaris, to Nebushaban, and Rabmag, and to Nergal-Sherezer, and to all the chief officers, and they sent someone to take Jeremiah from the court of the prison, and bring him to Gedeliah, the man whom Nebuchadnezzar had made governor over the cities of Judah. Jeremiah gets to go free, and live among the people left in the land.

We need to learn several things from this. Remember Proverbs 21: 1 – "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like rivers of water, He turns it wherever He wishes." I want you to understand that no matter how wicked men in authority are, they are indeed at all times in the hand of the Lord. And He can turn them to favor you when He would have it to be so. Jeremiah received better treatment at the hands of the Chaldean commanders than he did from the king and the princes of his own country. This was Jeremiah's righteous reward from God who so worked in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to be merciful to him. We will not always be allowed to be spared from the wickedness of conquering armies, but we can be certain that if we are not spared, yet the Lord is look out for our eternal welfare and good, if we are putting our trust in Him.

In Revelation 2: 10, Jesus says – "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer." "Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days." "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

“He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” That is the most important thing; that we not be hurt by the second death. What does that mean? This means that if the Christian is faithful in choosing to die for the sake of the truth, that his reward will be that he will reign with Christ in the life to come. That person shall not be hurt by dying, but will be spared all of the pains of eternal death in hell. Having been given eternal life by grace, through Christ, the Christian shall, by their faithfulness, based upon the Spirit’s working, overcome all the attacks and temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and overcoming they shall be seated on Christ’s throne with Him. There will be a crown of life awaiting them when they die for Christ’s cause of truth and righteousness. And when they die, they shall reign with Christ in heaven as the spirit of a just person made perfect, if you die a martyr.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – This leads us to the last act of Righteous Recompense and Reward, which is seen in God’s preservation and deliverance of Ebed-Melech.** (verses 15-18)

God singles this man out and sends him a special encouraging word to quell his fears and to give him an assurance of His help and favor to him. He tells him, through Jeremiah that He will be faithful to bring all His words of judgment to pass upon the city for adversity and not for good, and that he, Ebed-Melech would have to witness this great judgment. But, God would deliver him and he would fall by the sword. Do you see how perfectly God acts to reward the faith which men place in Him? No mention is made of the works of Ebed-Melech himself; in his speaking words of reproof to Zedekiah and obtaining permission to pull Jeremiah out of the mire. Rather, mention is made of his faith....”Because you have put your trust in Me, your life shall be a prize to you.” “I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword.”

God does know how to preserve and protect His people in the midst of His judgments. They will still, even so, be blessed in life, and in death. What the Lord would have us to understand today is not that we will not suffer, or perhaps even die, at the hands of wicked men. He would have us to understand that we will, by His great grace, be able to endure if we have put our trust in Him.” If we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with Him it says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2, verse 12. He want you to look up, at such a time, and to lift up your head, because your redemption draws nigh.

Our God is even now, in our days, judging the world in righteousness, and He wants us to possess our souls, in faith and patience. Ultimately you will not lose anything valuable in any lasting sense, for anything you lose in this life shall be given back to you in a greater way and a greater sense, on the day of the resurrection. Even in your death you shall triumph if you hold fast to Christ and His word. Even in tribulation or distress or persecution, or famine or nakedness; even in peril and sword, you will be more than a conqueror through Christ who loves you. Nothing shall separate you from Him. So will you not rejoice, and will you not sing, because nothing shall separate you from His love if you put your trust in Him. His righteous acts of recompense and reward shall all be seen to be perfect in the Day in which He returns and judges His saints to reward them.