

Perseverance – Jeremiah 37:11-17, 38:4-6,14-18

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Review of this morning sermon. One of the spiritual disciplines which is difficult for us is what Paul taught us here in 1 Corinthians. We naturally do not like conflict or times which create difficulties in our life, and as a result we usually “turn in” or go into a shell of protection. Perseverance is not something which comes naturally. It’s much easier to just sit down and quit. But, as a follower of Jesus, we cannot do this. How do we do this, though?

Tonight, I want to look at an example from the story of Jeremiah, who was a man who persevered.

Jeremiah faithfully proclaimed God's message of the coming destruction to Judah for forty years. Jeremiah's role as a prophet was to warn the Israelites of their coming captivity. Did they listen to him? No. They basically ignored all his warnings and predictions. You would think after proclaiming a message that was being fulfilled right before their eyes the people would start to believe Jeremiah. But Jeremiah's message only hardened the hearts of the people. They kept taking shots at him, knocking him down, beating him, leaving him for dead. But Jeremiah kept getting back up. He prevailed despite all his suffering. Why do you think Jeremiah was able to continue? Jeremiah persevered because of his obedience to God. He loved God's people and he understood that the truth was more important than his circumstance.

Read Jeremiah 37:11-17

Jeremiah was arrested on false charges of deserting his people.

First, we see Jeremiah leaving Jerusalem and going "to the land of Benjamin to claim his portion there among the people" (Jer. 37:12). The meaning of that statement is uncertain. It may relate to the field he had purchased. Nevertheless, Irijah saw him leaving, had him arrested, and falsely charged him as a traitor. Such an accusation should have angered Jeremiah. He had been loyal to his country. He had stood strong and voiced truth. He longed for his countrymen to turn to God. King Zedekiah sent for him to see if God had a word for Israel. The emaciated servant of God confronted the weak, vacillating king: "There is. You will be handed over to the king of Babylon" (Jer. 37:17).

Considering his circumstances, it would have been easy for Jeremiah to give in and give up, to just stay down. Jeremiah would not. He got back up, boldly proclaiming the truth. Explain how Jeremiah is a “type” of Christ.

Read Jeremiah 38:4-6

Jeremiah was also falsely accused of demoralizing the army

Next, we see Jeremiah accused of demoralizing the army. After all, he was proclaiming defeat, destruction, and devastation. The claim was that his words discouraged the soldiers who were left to defend the city and therefore led to their defeat. The officials wanted the king to kill Jeremiah, but the king wanted nothing to do with it, so he turned Jeremiah over to his people. It's

obvious that Jeremiah's message was not popular, and therefore, neither was he. The people wanted Jeremiah to tickle their ears with a sermon of mercy and freedom, but not one of God's justice. They wanted a God who would look lightly at their sin, not a God who would punish their sin. Jeremiah spoke the truth and was not popular for it!

Read Jeremiah 38:14-18

Jeremiah was asked to deliver the message to the king

After Jeremiah's rescue from the cistern, the king sent for him. The king wanted to hear from the prophet again. He asked Jeremiah to be honest, not withholding any information. He was hoping against hope that Jeremiah's prophecy would be more favorable, that Jerusalem would be spared. The king promised his protection. Jeremiah told the king that if he surrendered to the Babylonian king, he, the city, and his family would be spared. But if he did not surrender, the city would be burned down, and they all would perish.

Jeremiah hid nothing from the king. Jeremiah's message was the same and didn't change. The truth is often painful for us to hear. Why? Because the truth often brings with it conviction.

Faithful Obedience drove Jeremiah to subject himself to the will of the Father, to bear the truth. His obedience was put to the ultimate test, and he perfectly met it. He, too, ran for glory and won.

How do we persevere?

Stand by your convictions

A person with convictions knows what he believes, where he is going, and why. Convictions are not forced on an individual. They are beliefs and actions of choice. They are the truth, the mission, and the calling given by God that is not altered by time, people, opinions, or circumstances.

Martin Luther King, Jr. often told his children, "If a man has nothing that is worth dying for, he is not fit to live."

Make the right choices

People who persevere chose not to stay down. They get up. The choices we made yesterday influence our lives today.

Maintain personal character

Jeremiah maintained his character, standing on the truth of God's Word. His character remained intact.

The most pressing need in our world today is Christ-like character.

Refuse to compromise

Granted, there are circumstances that call for compromise to maintain peace and harmony. But one should not compromise the truth. Jeremiah did not compromise with Irijah, the sentry who arrested him, charging him with desertion. Nor with the officials who wanted Jeremiah to soften his message to one of peace and prosperity. Nor with King Zedekiah, who longed for Jeremiah to agree with his hired prophets who said that Judah would prevail.

Compromise is not always bad, but when it comes to issues of faith, we are expected to stand for Christ.

Conclusion

In the end, after you have been knocked down repeatedly, what will you do? After you have run your race, what will be your legacy? What will the message on your tombstone say?