

Jeremiah 40-43 • Safety in the Center of God's Will

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Jeremiah chapter 40 is where we are making our way through the Old Testament here on Wednesday evening. And we're getting down to the last bit here of Jeremiah. And we're going to actually make our way through these chapters fairly rapidly, I think.

Jerusalem has fallen. And now we're dealing with the fallout and the aftermath and the drama that happens or took place after the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army.

So, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we get into Your Word tonight, we pray just a special prayer of awakening to our hearts, Lord, to hear Your voice. To understand from the scriptures tonight, what You want us to understand. To help us to see You. To help us to understand with greater insight, Your heart, Your gospel, Your redemptive plan, Your righteousness, Your justice, Your mercy. Lord, we want to see You. We want to see You tonight. We pray that we would be able to receive all that You want to bring to our hearts. We commit our hearts to just really focus on You tonight. In Jesus precious name, amen. Amen. Amen.

Alright. Again, here as we get into chapter 40, the city of Jerusalem has fallen. It starts off by saying in verse one that:

"1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he took him bound in chains along with all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon."

So stop there for just a moment after this first verse. I want to just fill you in. The typical way that the Babylonian army would conquer a kingdom and deal with the people of that kingdom, was to take them captive to, back to their homeland. And so here's Jeremiah, who has been spending all this time telling people that the Babylonian army is coming. The devastation is going to happen and all, and of course it all has. And that the people are going to be taken

captive to Babylon. He himself is bound. And is going with the rest of the people in this, I'm assuming, what is a huge parade of people that are beginning to make their trek. What an arduous trek. I mean, can you imagine, too, for people to go all the way to Babylon. And he's, he is bound just like everyone else.

But there is a word that the Lord gives him, when the captain of the guard comes up to Jeremiah, takes off his bonds and releases him. And we'll see more how this actually went. But I want you to notice what happens here.

Verse 2, it says:

"2 The captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, "The Lord your God pronounced this disaster against this place."

Now notice that Nebuchadnezzar knew of the prophecies that had been given against Judah by Jeremiah. Obviously, word of these prophecies had made its way to Babylon. And these prophecies actually made their way to the Babylonian leaders. And so he is well aware. Notice what he goes on to say in verse three:

"3 The Lord has brought it about, and has done as he said. Because you sinned against the Lord and did not obey his voice, this thing has come upon you."

This is incredible. The insight that this pagan has. Which many of the Jews still refused to see even though Jeremiah had been saying it all along. This man is just He, you know, he didn't say, and this is interesting for the captain of the guard.

You would think he would say, well the reason you guys are in this position is because we're strong. And I've got a great army. And we came and we laid siege against the city. And it fell. And now we're taking you captive. And that's why this all has happened. It's because you guys were rebellious against our leadership. Which, of course, they had been for years. And we decided we'd had enough of you guys. And we came and we attacked and we prevailed. Simple as that.

I mean, wouldn't that be your typical sort of understanding from someone outside of a relationship with God and the knowledge of everything that had gone on here. And yet this man nails it with spiritual understanding. You know, the reason you guys... the reason this all happened to you...he doesn't say it was

because our army was strong. He says it's because you guys sinned and God did this. The Lord did this. This is really kind of mind blowing.

Verse four:

"4 Now behold, I release you today from the chains on your hands. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you well, but if it seems wrong to you to come with me to Babylon, do not come. See, the whole land is before you; go wherever you think it (is) good and right to go. 5 If you remain, then return to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, (and by the way, he is the appointed, well, I guess it goes on to say that) the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon appointed governor of the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people. Or go wherever you think it's (correction it) right to go" So the captain of the guard gave him an allowance of food and a present, and let him go."

Isn't this great? This is the conquering captain of the Babylonian army who has really, I mean stop and think about it. He has no incentive to let this man go. Other than the fact that Jeremiah has been doing all this prophesying for all this time. He has spiritual insight.

And then he comes to Jeremiah, takes off his bonds and says, you just, hey, if you want to come to Babylon, great. But you don't need to come as a captive. Just come and I'll take care of you. I'll actually look after you. Or if you want to go back to the city, I know it's in ruins, but you can hang out with Gedaliah. He's been made the governor of the land. You can support him. Or you can go anywhere you want to go. It's fine either way.

People, this is called the favor of the Lord. And this is what we pray for sometimes when we're dealing with situations that seem to be so completely out of our control, and yet we need to walk in God's favor toward a particular situation.

You know, if somebody's trying to get a visa to stay in a country where they're ministering and we say, Lord, give them favor with the authorities. Maybe the authorities don't even know them. But God can do this. God can put favor in your path in such a way that someone might give you a job who might not have even given you any notice apart from the Lord's favor. Or you could get a raise suddenly. Or you could... it's just the favor of the Lord.

And you chalk it up to that. Well, how did that happen? Oh, it was the favor of the Lord. God gave me favor with these individuals and so forth. And this is what you're seeing happening in Jeremiah's life.

And it says in verse six:

"6 Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah (So we know what he wanted to do. He wanted to go back to the city, essentially, and support the governor) the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah, and lived with him among the people who were left in the land. (And it says:)

7 When all the captains of the forces in the open country and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor of (correction in) the land and had committed to him men, women, and children, those of the poorest of the land who had not been taken into exile (in) (correction to) Babylon, 8 they went to Gedaliah at Mizpah- Ishmael (and then it names the ones who did, and of note here is Ishmael) the son of Nethaniah. (There's also this man named) Johanan (You're going to hear a lot about these guys in the next couple of chapters.) the son of Kareah, (then there's) Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, (Tanhumeth the sons of Ephai or) the sons (rather) of Ephai the Netophathite, Jezaniah the son of (correction the) Maccathite, they and their men."

All right, let me explain what's going on here. Because this might need a little explanation. You'll notice that what we first read there in verse seven is that, the captains of the forces in the open country and their men heard that Gedaliah had been made governor. Who are we talking about here? We're talking about some of the scattered forces of Judah.

Because even though Jerusalem fell, and the whole army that was there had been defeated by the Babylonian army, you have to know that there were certain small, straggling groups of Jews that were out in the open country. And they were essentially stationed out there to try to put up a defense before the kingdom or the army of Babylon made its way to Jerusalem. They were to kind of support the outer rim of their land, but they realized the Babylonian army was too strong. And they probably just went into hiding for a period of time until things got figured out.

So you've got these captains and you've got their men. And they're just, they've been out living in the wilderness, or out in forested areas or wherever they happen to be. And word gets to them that people have been carried off into exile. And Gedaliah has been made governor of the land. And so they make

their way to Mizpah where Gedaliah has kind of set up his governorship of the land.

And again, you're going to take note of this man named Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. And we're going to find out in the very first part of the next chapter that he was actually a descendant of King David. But he was not a godly man. He was not a man of faith. He was also, by the way, one of King Zedekiah's officers.

And you know, the kind of man King Zedekiah was. He was a very godless man. And you'll remember that he tried to escape when the city was broken into, and he was captured. He watched as his sons and his highest officials were put to death in front of his eyes. And then they gouged out his eyes. And so, that's what he got. And we're going to read now about one of his officers.

It says in verse nine that:

"9 Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, swore to them and their men, saying, "Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you."

So essentially what they're saying is, they've sent word then to Gedaliah and they've said, we've been hanging out in the outer areas of the land. So what's going to happen to us if we come out into the open? Are the Babylonians going to kill us? Are they going to take us captive? What's going to happen to us?

So Gedaliah, as the governor, gives them a word of assurance. That if they come out, they're going to be fine. Don't worry, he says. And if you'll just serve the Chaldeans and served the King of Babylon, it's going to be well with you, so don't worry about it. He goes on in verse ten to say:

"10 As for me, I will dwell at Mizpah, to represent you before the Chaldeans who will come to us. But as for you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil, and store them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that you have taken."

So in other words, just live your life. The Babylonians have basically taken everybody they're going to take at this point. They've left poor people in the land because they knew the poor people were too weak to bring any kind of a rebellious action against them. And he's basically saying the danger is really kind of past. Just chill, live in the land, serve the King of Babylon, and let's just do this thing, right? Because this is the Lord's discipline. Let's submit to the Lord's discipline.

So in verse 11, it goes on to say:

"Likewise, when all the Judeans who were in Moab (and that should, it kind of means, who had escaped to Moab) and among the Ammonites and in Edom and in other lands heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, (the) son of Shaphan, as governor over them, ¹² then all the Judeans returned from all the places to which they had been driven and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah. And they gathered wine and summer fruits in great abundance."

So now we hear about refugees who are coming out of hiding. They knew that this situation with Babylon was dire. They didn't want to die in any kind of a military conflict. And so they ran off and hid in some of these neighboring countries. Like Moab and Ammon and so forth and so on. So they hear that's what's going on.

Babylon has come in, they've conquered Jerusalem, they left. They took exiles with them. Gedaliah's in charge. Let's go back home. Because they're just going to probably leave us alone now. And, you know, essentially they would have.

Verse 13 tells us that:

"¹³ Now Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders (in) (correction of) the forces in the open country came to Gedaliah and (correction at) Mizpah ¹⁴ and said to him, "Do you know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah (that's that descendant of David) to take your life?" (in other words to assassinate you; but look, listen to this) But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam would not believe them."

So it's interesting here, and this is some of the drama that's going on post destruction of Jerusalem. Gedaliah hears of this death threat against himself perpetrated by the king of the Ammonites. Now, the obvious question that's going to probably pop up in your mind is why would the king of Ammon care and want to see the governor of the land assassinated?

And the answer really comes from a better understanding of the relationship that Judah had with Ammon leading up to this attack by the Babylonian army. Because you see, they had actually had a secret meeting, these two nations, Judah and Ammon, before the Babylonian invasion. And they met together to talk about how they might come together and rebel against the king of Babylon. And nothing really came out of that original meeting that they had.

But several years later Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he was one of the, he was Pharaoh fairly recently. He talked both countries into coming together along with him and with Tyre, okay, right there on the coast. And kind of creating a group of nations that would come together and take their stand against Babylon. So Pharaoh, king of Egypt, goes to Ammon, goes to Judah, goes to Tyre, and to those leaders and says, let's stand together united against the Babylonian threat.

Well, so the Babylonians, of course, knew that this was going on. They decided to respond to this rebellion by this group of countries. And in their determination on which country to attack first, they made the decision to attack Judah first. And, of course, they were successful. The walls of Judah eventually fell, and Ammon actually rejoiced at the falling of the walls of Jerusalem.

And here's why. When they heard that the walls of Jerusalem had fallen, they figured, these are the Ammonites now, they figured well the Babylonians are less likely to attack us. Because they're going to be busy for a long time cleaning up all this issue with the Jews there in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Because they've got a, they came in there, they decimated the place. They got to carry off all this stuff. They got to take all these people back to their homeland. It's going to be a long time before they even come back in the area.

It's kind of like how other animals in the wild act after the lion has killed one of the gazelles. Have you ever seen that in the wild? They're all on high alert until one of the big cats actually makes a kill. And then they'll start just grazing nearby this predator because they know that the kill has been made. And the predator is going to be busy with the kill. And that's kind of way the Ammonites treated this whole situation with the fall of, of Jerusalem.

So now when the Ammonites learned that Gedaliah was put in a position of governorship of the land and was cooperating with Babylon. And there weren't going to be any skirmishes or issues like that because the governor is cooperating with them. Now they're getting afraid again. Because they're thinking, well if order comes to the land and the Babylonians aren't busy cleaning up little wildfires, they're going to much sooner be able to come and attack us then.

So you see, it was in Ammon's best interest to destabilize the region by assassinating the governor of Judah and creating an instability that Babylon would have to keep coming back and putting out fires. So, their whole purpose is to keep Babylon busy with Judah. Are you with me? That's why they wanted to assassinate Gedaliah. Let's keep the Babylonians focused on Judah. Let's kill

the governor that they put in place. And that's going to cause them to bring some kind of retribution or something like that.

Okay, verse 15:

" 15 Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah at Mizpah, "Please (he says,) let me go and strike down Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no one will know it. Why should he take your life, so that all the Judeans who are gathered about you would be scattered, and the remnant of Judah would perish?"

See, that's the thing. Johanan knows and understands that if Ishmael is successful assassinating Gedaliah, the Babylonians are going to come and they're going to punish the people. Because they're going to say, why can't you people just live under our control? Why do you have to be doing... And, and people are going to die. And so he's kind of prevailing upon the governor to let him go and assassinate this suspected assassin.

Verse 16 says:

"16 But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, "You shall not do this thing, for you are speaking falsely of Ishmael."

Chapter 41:

1 In the seventh month, Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of the royal family, (There's the note that tells us that he was of the Davidic line.) one of the chief officers of the king, (that's King Zedekiah) came with ten men to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah. As they ate bread together there (correction there together) at Mizpah, 2 Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the ten men with him rose up and struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword, and killed him, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor in the land." (So Ishmael is successful in destabilizing the region, which is what Ammon wanted them to do.) 3 Ishmael also struck down all the Judeans who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldean soldiers who happened to be there."

So he killed the Jews that were also with Gedaliah, and whatever contingent of Babylonian military was set up there at Mizpah to kind of keep order. He assassinated, killed them all. So, you know, he's again, he's just trying to create issues.

" 4 On the day after the murder of Gedaliah, before anyone knew of it, eighty men arrived from Shechem (correction and) Shiloh and Samaria,"

Now, this is interesting people, stop there. These are guys, these are cities from the northern region that used to be Israel. Now, Israel fell long before to the Assyrians, many years before. But you can tell that some of the Jews were still living up in those regions. And they were still very much connected to the southern kingdom of Judah, because, of course, that's where Jerusalem and the temple were. And these men are coming down and it tells us here as we keep reading why. It says:

Their beards were shaved, their clothes torn and their bodies gashed. (correction *"with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed,"*) (and that's of course, signs of sorrow and mourning) *"bringing grain offerings and incense to present at the temple of the Lord.* (Now, of course, the temple has been decimated, but they're coming to the site of the temple to do this nonetheless.) *6 And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah came out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he came.* (Now this is a ruse on Ishmael's part. He's trying to convince them that he's just as sorrowful at the fall of Jerusalem as they are.) *As he met them, he said to them, "Come in to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. (And) "7 When they came into the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the men with him slaughtered them and cast them into a cistern. 8 But there were ten men among them who said to Ishmael, "Do not put us to death, for we have stores of wheat, barley, (and) oil, and honey hidden in the fields." So he refrained and did not put them to death with their companions."*

So we're told here that ten of the eighty actually managed to bargain for their lives by promising a cache of supplies of food and that sort of thing, which apparently was needed pretty badly because Ishmael and his group of men took that bargain. And it says in verse nine:

"9 Now the cistern into which Ishmael had thrown all the bodies of the men whom he had struck down along with Gedaliah was the large cistern that King Asa had made for defense against Baasha king of Israel; Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with the slain. (So he's just throwing dead bodies into this cistern, which one of the previous kings had made to carry water in the case of a siege when Judah had been fighting with the northern kingdom of Israel)

10 Then Ishmael took captive all the rest of the people who were in Mizpah, the king's daughters and all the people who were left at Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan, (and) the captain of the guard, had committed to Gedaliah the

son of Ahikam. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah took them captive and set out (over) to cross over to the Ammonites.

So you can see that this where this guy's at. He's probably going to get paid handsomely by the king of Amon for assassinating the governor, destabilizing the region and bringing exiles with him, basically captives.

11 But when Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders, (and this is the man, you remember, who had warned Gedaliah about the assassination) and all the leaders of the forces with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, 12 they took all their men and went to fight against Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. They came upon him at the great pool that is in Gibeon. 13 And when all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him, they rejoiced. (because they were thinking, wow, these people have come to help us. They've come to set us free.) 14 So all the people whom Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah turned around and came back, and went to Johanan the son of Kareah. 15 But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. 16 Then Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him took from Mizpah all the rest of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, after he had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam- soldiers, women, children, and eunuchs, whom Johanan brought back from Gibeon. 17 And they went and stayed at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem, (intending, this is important) intending to go to Egypt (Why, it explains it in the last verse.) 18 because of the Chaldeans. For they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land." (thus destabilizing the region)

So, this Johanan guy he gets all these people back that Ishmael had taken captive. He brings them back to the land. They settle in this little area near Bethlehem. But they're saying among themselves, you know, the king of Babylon is going to come back here with his army and they're not going to ask any questions. And they don't know we've tried to be obedient. All they know is Gedaliah is dead. And they're going to come in here swinging. And so, Ishmael successfully destabilized the region. And we better actually get out of here and wait for things to cool down.

So, they're talking among themselves and they're saying, I think we should go to Egypt and just chill there. Because Pharaoh, you know, at least gave expressions of friendship to us in the past. So, let's go to Egypt. Let's see what

the Lord has to say about that. Now remember, Jeremiah is in this group. He's in this group.

"¹ Then all the commanders of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiiah, and all the people from the least of the greatest, came near ² and said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Let our plea for mercy come before you, and pray to the Lord your God for us, for all this remnant- because we are left with but a few, as your eyes see us- ³ that the Lord your God may show us the way we should go, and the thing that we should do."

Does that sound positive to you? Does this request sound positive to you? It does to me. Sounds positive when anybody comes to a man of God and says, hey, we're asking you to intercede for us. We're asking you to pray and we're, we want to know where the Lord would have us to go. We want to be led. Now that's an easy thing to say, isn't it?

But remember these people are filled with fear because they believe the Babylonian army is going to be returning to the land. To bring justice for all of the destabilization that's been happening. And all the deaths and everything that's been going on. So they're scared. They are scared. And they're asking for prayer. For the leading of the Lord. Let's see how that goes.

Verse four:

"⁴ Jeremiah the prophet said to them, "I have heard you. Behold, I will pray to the Lord your God according to your request, and whatever the Lord answers you I will tell you. I will keep nothing back from you." (Listen to this.) ⁵ Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act according to all the word with which the Lord your God sends you to us. ⁶ Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we are sending you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God."

Boy, that's strong language. They're saying whatever happens whatever God says, we're going to do it. We promise. Okay?

⁷ At the end of ten days the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. ⁸ Then he summoned Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces who were with him, and all the people from the least to the greatest, (so this is the whole remnant) ⁹ and said to them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your plea for mercy before him: ¹⁰ If you will remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant

you, and not pluck you up; for I relent of the disaster that I did to you. ¹¹ Do not fear the king of Babylon, (you can tell that's what they were doing) of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the Lord, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand. ¹² I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land. ¹³ But if you say, 'We will not remain in this land,' disobeying the voice of the Lord your God ¹⁴ and saying, 'No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,' ¹⁵ then hear the word of the Lord, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there, ¹⁶ then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die. ¹⁷ All the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to live there shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. They shall have no remnant or survivor from the disaster that I will bring upon them.

¹⁸ "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: As my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You shall become an execration, (which is a fancy word that means, you will, your name will be remembered in a very poor way. In other words your name will be denounced and condemned, all right.) a horror, a curse, and a taunt. You shall see this place no more. ¹⁹ The Lord has said to you, O remnant of Judah, 'Do not go to Egypt.' Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day ²⁰ that you have gone astray at the cost of your lives. For you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the Lord our God, and whatever the Lord our God says, declare to us and we will do it.' ²¹ And I have this day declared it to you, (and Jeremiah already knows, he says,) but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God in anything that he sent me to tell you. ²² Now therefore know for a certainty that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to live."

Wow. Here's the interesting thing about this scenario. It was truly a dangerous scenario. There's no question about that. There's no question about the fact that they were in a dangerous place, okay? It was very common when there was this kind of upheaval for the conquering king to come back and punish the people, and they knew it.

So this was a dangerous situation. There's no denying it. The natural instinct is to say, let's go where we're going to be safe. Let's go to Egypt. But God comes back and says, listen, if you stay here, I will take care of you. I'll give you mercy and I'll make sure that the King of Babylon shows you mercy. In fact,

you'll be able to stay in the land and I'll prosper you in it, okay. But if you go, all the things you fear will happen to you here, will follow you there.

This is a really interesting truth that we are able to extract from this passage. And this is it, even in what would otherwise appear to be a very dangerous situation, you are safer there in the center of God's will, than you would be by going where you think it's safe to go. Very important we see that. Where's the safest place for you to be? In the center of God's will following His Word, being obedient to His Spirit. That is the safest, strongest, best place for you to be.

But pastor, this is dangerous. This is a dangerous time we're living in. There are dangers all around us. And they could spring upon us at any time. Yeah, that's true. That's true. Here's the question you really have to grapple with, where does the Lord want you to be? That's the most important.

The most important question is not, is this place more dangerous, or is this place more safe, that's not the important question. The question is where does God want you to be? Because where he wants you to be is the safest place to be, even if it is, rationally thinking, the most dangerous place on the face of the planet.

So very important for us to kind of keep that in mind. Especially in the times in which we live. We live in dangerous times. We're living in increasingly dangerous times. But just as we're seeing how God takes care of those who are faithful to Him and who set their heart to obey Him, we can expect that same gracious, merciful provision of the Lord in our lives as well. We are the safest at the center of His will.

Chapter 43:

"¹ When Jeremiah finished speaking to all the people all the (correction these) words of the Lord their God, with which the Lord their God had sent him to them, ² Azariah the son of Hoshai and Johanan the son of Kareah and all (look at this) the insolent men said to Jeremiah, "You're (correction "You are) telling a lie. The Lord our God did not send you to say, 'Do not go to Egypt to live there,' but Baruch the son of Nehriah has set you against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they may kill us or take us into exile in Babylon." ⁴ So Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces and all the people did not obey the voice of the Lord, to remain in the land of Judah. ⁵ But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to live in the land of Judah (and) from all the nations to which they'd (correction they had) been driven-

(and by the way, that includes Jeremiah) *6 the men, the women, the children, the princesses, and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, (the) son of Shaphan; also Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah. 7 And they came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the Lord. And they arrived at Tahpanhes.*

8 (And) Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes: 9 "Take in your hands large stones and hide them in the mortar in the pavement that is at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah, 10 and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will set his throne above these stones that I have hidden, and he will spread his royal canopy over them. 11 He shall come and strike the land of Egypt, giving over to the pestilence those who are doomed to the pestilence, to captivity those who are doomed to captivity, and to the sword those who are doomed to the sword. 12 I shall kindle a fire in the temples of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them and carry them away captive. And he shall clean the land of Egypt as a shepherd cleans his cloak of vermin, and he shall go away from there in peace. 13 He shall break the obelisks of Heliopolis, which is in the land of Egypt, and the temples of the gods of Egypt he shall burn with fire.'"

So the word of the Lord is very clear through Jeremiah that God is going to bring Nebuchadnezzar to Egypt to do exactly what he did in Jerusalem. So there is no place of safety outside of the will of the Lord. And we see that here very clearly in these passages.

So isn't it just interesting though, I think we can all relate to this from the standpoint of responding to our circumstances with fear. And not taking the time to pray. And not making up our mind to truly follow the Lord, no matter what he says.

Fear is a very powerful master. And we have to be careful not to give in to it, in our own personal lives and things that are foisted upon us from outside as well. Because the enemy knows that we respond, we'll respond obediently to fear. We will put fear in a place above the Lord, our God. We will do that. We can do that.

It's important for every Christian to admit, it's in me to crown fear above God. It's in me. It's in my human heart. And if I'm not careful, and if I don't stay close to the Lord, stay in His Word, praying for discernment, praying for courage and boldness, I could do this. I could let fear overwhelm me and begin to do things that are contrary to the will of God. It's in me. To think that it's not possible is to

deceive ourselves. To think ourselves immune to the power of fear. And so we do have to be very careful.

The problem with fear is that we learn to obey it in our daily personal lives all the time. And we do it in very small, subtle sort of ways. I'm afraid that if I do this, this is going to happen. So I'm going to do this to make sure that what I'm afraid about isn't going to happen. And we do it all the time. We don't even think twice about it. I'm afraid if I go to the movie with my friends, we're going to do this. I'm afraid that if I go on vacation at this time of the year, we might run into the storm sea. I'm afraid...we do it all the time.

Sue and I were talking earlier today about a passage that she was reading this morning in her own Bible time, from the book of Acts. After the disciples were released from jail, after being threatened not to preach any longer in the name of Jesus. And they came back and they shared what had happened. And there was a very real threat on their lives. There was a very real threat that was hanging in the air.

And so what the disciples decided to do, and you can read about it in Acts chapter 4, is they decided to pray for boldness. They said, Lord, give us boldness. And the Bible tells us that the house was shaken. And the Holy Spirit fell upon the assembled believers. And they were emboldened by the Spirit to continue to preach the gospel, to share the salvation that is only found in Jesus Christ.

But they didn't say, Lord, come against our enemies. Take the teeth out of their threats. They didn't pray those things. Lord, stop this terrible persecution that's starting to happen to us. They didn't pray that either. They said, Lord, make us bold so we don't give into fear so we don't back down.

Because you see, you've given us a commission to go into all the world preaching the gospel baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And teaching them to obey You until You come back. And we want to be faithful to that call. But fear is an ever-present threat to stopping us from doing what we're called to do. So, Lord, make us bold. Bold to stand. Bold to stand, amen.

Father, thank You so much. Lord, I believe I, I really do, I believe that You're still emboldening Your people through the Spirit. Literally falling upon us with the spirit of boldness, courage to do what You've called us to do. And not to give way to fear. Not to live our lives in fear. Lord, that's no way to live. Because when we do we give in, and we make fear our master. And we've

already been pledged to another Master and that's You. And You have not given us a spirit of fear.

So Heavenly Father we long, we long to serve You as our only Master. And we pray in Jesus' name that You would give us the courage to step out in boldness. Even in the face of an ever-present danger. Be with us, we pray. Strengthen us, we pray, Father God, to do Your will. Always to stay in the center of Your will. That's the safest place we can be. Even when everybody all around us is crying fear, fear, fear. Help us, Lord, to trust in You with all of our hearts. In Jesus precious name, we pray, amen.