

JEREMIAH AND THE TWO ROLLS OF PROPHECIES

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Lessons: Jeremiah 36

We learned recently how Jeremiah the Prophet had been arrested and tried for treason because he had prophesied against the city and the temple, saying that they would be captured and destroyed by the King of Babylon. And how some of the princes had helped Jeremiah, and defended him; and that he was not put to death. But the people were so angry against him that he dared not walk abroad among the people lest they stone him. Wherefore, Ahikam, a close friend of his who had helped to defend him at the trial, hid Jeremiah away and took care of him for a long time.

Now after he had been in hiding for several months, the Lord commanded him to write down in the roll of a book all the prophecies he had received from time to time since he began to speak the Word of the Lord, and to read them in the ears of the people, that they might repent of their wickedness and be saved from the King of Babylon.

So Jeremiah called to him, Baruch, a very good friend and a scribe; and as he spoke, Baruch wrote down all his prophecies in a roll of book, or a scroll. Then said Jeremiah, that because he could not go out among the people, Baruch should take the roll into the temple and read it before the people on a Fast Day. This Baruch did, and the princes that heard he had read these prophecies sent for Baruch to come to them in a room of the temple, and to bring with him the roll and read it to them. This he did, and they questioned him as to how the roll had been written—for they knew not where Jeremiah was. Baruch told them boldly that Jeremiah had spoken all these words at the command of the Lord, and that he had written them down. They were afraid of what the king might do, and they were friendly to Baruch; so they told him to also go into hiding, while they read the roll to the king.

Baruch having gone into hiding, one of them told the king about the roll and he commanded that it be brought and read before him. He was in a room where there was a fire burning on the hearth—for it was winter. And they brought the roll and began to read it. But before they had read more than a small part of it the king snatched it from them in a rage and cut it in half with a knife. They begged him not to destroy it, but he cast it into the fire and burned it up. And those who feared the Lord dared not even show before the king that they were sorry for what had been done.

Then he sent men to search everywhere for Jeremiah and for Baruch, seeking to put them to death, but they could not be found. And so they escaped his wrath. And the Word of the Lord came again to Jeremiah telling him to write down again in another roll all the former words, and to add to them a curse against King Jehoiachim, and against his house; and to preserve the book that it might not be destroyed.

The Lord commanded this prophecy to be written in order that the king and the people might repent and turn back to the worship of the Lord, and so might be saved from the anger that threatened them. It was a brave thing for Jeremiah to do, for he knew that the king would be enraged and would seek his life. And yet he was ready to do anything the Lord told him, in order to save his country.

The word of the Lord is given that we may know how we should live. It is given to rebuke men for evil—doing, and to cause them to repent and follow the Lord. It is given to save them from the power of hell and to bring them into the happiness of heaven. Every man is free to obey the Word, and he is free to disobey it; but to destroy it, and to seek deliberately to defy the Lord's commands, this is an act of contempt for the Lord, and of hatred against Him, and places man in the power of the evil spirits—even as this act of Jehoiachim placed him in the power of the King of Babylon, in spite of anything the Lord could do to save him.

It is the same with you children. Your parents and your teachers know from the Lord's Word what it is right for you to do. And this Word of the Lord they tell to you that you may obey Him, and grow up to be good men and good women, with whom the angels can be present and from whom the evil spirits can be kept away by the power of the Lord. Often you do not want to do what they tell you. You prefer to do something else, so you rebel against the Lord, and you disobey your parents. And this puts you into the power of evil spirits who lead you farther and farther away from the Lord, and from heaven, and at last take your souls captive and bind them in hell.

It is of the very greatest importance therefore that you should learn to obey your parents. What they tell you is for your good—it is from the Lord, and from what He has told them is right for you to do. And for you to disobey them, so long as you are children, is for you to disobey the Lord. If when you are children you do not learn to obey your parents and teachers, you will not be able to obey the Lord when you grow up to be men and women.

Now your parents and teachers can compel you to obey. They can punish you until you are afraid to disobey. And this is necessary when you rebel against them, in order to save you. For you do not know any better, and this is the only way in which you can learn. But that which is of real value is for you to make up your mind that you will compel yourselves. You must fight against the temptation to do what you want to do, when that is against what you have

been told to do. You must say to yourselves, “No, it is wrong for me to do that. It is against the Lord’s will. It will bring only evil upon me. I will not do it.”

If Jehoiachim had done this, and if he had listened to the prophecy of Jeremiah and repented of his wickedness and turned again to the worship of the Lord, even then the Lord would have saved him and his people. But because he refused to do this it was only a short time before the King of Babylon came and captured Jerusalem, and slew Jehoiachim the King who had defied the Lord in destroying the roll of Jeremiah.