



Last week we looked at how Belshazzar and his nobles ignored God and continued their narcissistic celebration despite warnings of their destruction. Unfortunately this attitude is often little different among the people of God. Jeremiah's warnings to the people of Judah only a few decades prior received an even angrier response from Jehoiakim, king of Judah. In Jeremiah 36 God tells Jeremiah to write down his warnings on a scroll and have it read to the people. So Jeremiah calls his scribe Baruch, Baruch writes down everything Jeremiah says, and then Baruch goes to the Temple and reads it to the people.

The way Baruch reads the scroll indicates some of the early acceptance of its contents. Gemariah, son of Shaphan, apparently trusts Jeremiah and Baruch since he allows Baruch to read from his room in the Temple overlooking the gate to the Temple. Then as Baruch reads he catches the attention of Gemariah's son, Micaiah, who runs to tell his father and some other officials about the message. What Micaiah shares with them moves them significantly, so they send Jehudi to bring Baruch to the palace to read it to them (11-16).

The officials listen to Baruch carefully, recognize the significance of the warnings, and respond the way God desires. "When they heard all these words, they looked at each other in fear and said to Baruch, 'We must report all of these words to the king'" (36:16). However, they also recognize that the king is not likely to receive the warning as well as they have. Consequently, the officials tell Baruch to go into hiding with Jeremiah. They are to tell no one where they are hiding.

With Baruch and Jeremiah in hiding, the officials go to the king with the divine warning. King Jehoiakim agrees to hear the message, but no one is optimistic. Sure enough, the king does not heed the words of God through Jeremiah. As the scroll is read he cuts off the portion that Jehudi reads and throws it into the fire. After the single reading of the scroll, "the king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes" (36:24). The divided response among God's people is clear; some want to preserve God's word and follow it while others prefer the status quo and life among the nations. In fact, King Jehoiakim sends some of his other officials to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch, though they cannot find them.

Jeremiah soon gets word of the scroll's destruction. God tells him and Baruch to reproduce the contents in a new scroll, which is perhaps part of the book of Jeremiah as we have it now. They do so, add God's specific word of destruction for the king, and continue to warn the people and call them to repentance. They are certainly not popular, but Jeremiah and others like some of the royal officials continue to serve the Lord faithfully until Jerusalem's fall and beyond.

Discussion Questions

How does purpose and a role in God's mission contribute to happiness? How does this kind of happiness compare to the happiness that the world offers?

Being on mission requires both seeking and speaking God's truth (being prophetic). How can holding to the truth sometimes lead to being excluded and rejected?

How can we know that any exclusion or rejection by others is a result of choosing to follow God rather than our poor behavior?