



STUDY GUIDE

SERMON TOPIC:

“Please Step Out of Line”

WEEK 3

1. READ

Pastor’s Selected Scriptures: Jeremiah 38 : 7 – 13 New King James Version (NKJV)

7 Now Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs, who was in the king’s house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon. When the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin, 8 Ebed-Melech went out of the king’s house and spoke to the king, saying: 9 “My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is likely to die from hunger in the place where he is. For *there is* no more bread in the city.” 10 Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, “Take from here thirty men with you, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies.” 11 So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took from there old clothes and old rags, and let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah. 12 Then Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, “Please put these old clothes and rags under your armpits, under the ropes.” And Jeremiah did so. 13 So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Jeremiah 39 : 15 – 18 New King James Version (NKJV)

15 Meanwhile the word of the Lord had come to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 16 “Go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be *performed* in that day before you. 17 But I will deliver you in that day,” says the Lord, “and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you *are* afraid. 18 For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me,” says the Lord.’ ”

Further Reading: Genesis 37 : 12 – 24 New International Version (NIV)

12 Now his brothers had gone to graze their father’s flocks near Shechem, 13 and Israel said to Joseph, “As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them.” “Very well,” he replied. 14 So he said to him, “Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me.” Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, 15 a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, “What are you looking for?” 16 He replied, “I’m looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?” 17 “They have moved on from here,” the man answered. “I heard them say, ‘Let’s go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. 18 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they



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plotted to kill him. 19 “Here comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. 20 “Come now, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.” 21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. “Let’s not take his life,” he said. 22 “Don’t shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him.” Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— 24 and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

2. REFLECT

[Make sure to review this week’s sermon!]



This week, our Senior Pastor Rev. Matthew L. Watley continued his sermon series for this month entitled, “Forward.” Throughout this series, we have learned that although the future is uncertain, we can trust that God is making a way for us to move forward. As we prepare to face the new challenges that come with a new season, the Word of God provides us with important lessons we must learn as we take our next steps.



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In our lesson for week three entitled “Please Step Out of Line,” Pastor Watley reminds us that God will never leave us, nor forsake us. In fact, in one of our scriptures for this week (Jeremiah 39:17), God promises to be with Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian five times, in five different ways. In addition to what God has already done, God affirms and reiterates that Ebed-Melech will be rescued, safe, and taken care of. This is an important reminder for us because often in times of crisis, we let the *Facts* about our situation, trump our *Faith* in God. However, as Pastor Watley asks:

At what point does God’s past performance and promises turn into present trust and confidence?

In other words, how many times does God have to prove His faithfulness? How many times and how many ways does God need to show us that we will not be forsaken? In Jeremiah 39:17-18, God communicates this message to Ebed-Melech five times, in five different ways. And yet, I am sure if we take a moment to reflect on our own lives, we will be able to identify countless instances of God proving to be our ever-present help in times of trouble. Even when the world around us seems unbearably chaotic, we are reminded time and time again that God is with us.

For Ebed-Melech, this was not the first time that he witnessed God’s faithfulness first-hand. Just a chapter before in Jeremiah 38:7-13, God used Ebed-Melech to bless someone else. As a worker in the King’s house, Ebed-Melech heard that Jeremiah the prophet was imprisoned and left to die in a muddy pit. Immediately when he heard, Ebed-Melech used his access to the King and his position as an officer to speak against the injustice on Jeremiah’s behalf. Little did Jeremiah know, while he was struggling and sinking deeper into the muddy dungeon of Malchiah, God had already pre-planned, arranged, and orchestrated his deliverance!

When Ebed-Melech goes to the King, he is directed to pull Jeremiah up from the pit. As verse 10 explains, “Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, “Take from here thirty men with you, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies.” The King tells Ebed-Melech what to do, but he doesn’t tell him how to do it. It is up to Ebed-Melech to figure out how to get Jeremiah out of his current condition. Knowing that Jeremiah is most likely weak and tired from no food or water, in addition to the fact that mud creates slippery conditions, Ebed-Melech goes above and beyond to help Jeremiah. Instead of simply throwing down a rope for Jeremiah to climb up, Ebed-Melech gets old clothes and rags for Jeremiah to put under his arms to protect himself and preserve his energy. Ebed-Melech and the other men then pull Jeremiah up to safety.

Even though he did not initially receive instructions on how to get Jeremiah out of the pit, Ebed-Melech already had access to everything he needed to complete the task. Moreover, from the moment he spoke out against the unjust treatment of Jeremiah, all the way up until his careful rescue, Ebed-Melech prioritized Jeremiah’s humanity and exhibited God’s heart for justice. Ebed-Melech’s actions show us how God has called us to reach back, as we move *Forward*.



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3. RESPOND

Introspective Questions

- Who are you reaching back to help, advocate for, or support?
- How has God demonstrated that you are not alone? How have you experienced God's presence?

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think the King was so easily willing to release Jeremiah from the dungeon?
- If you were Jeremiah, how would you have handled being thrown in the pit for doing the Lord's work? Would you still speak out if you knew you were going to be imprisoned?