

**Jeremiah 37**  
**Hope In This Final Hour**  
**J.D. Farag**

KAPONO: Lord, thank You so much for this time of worship, Lord. Thank You that we can lift You up in song. We recognize who You are and what You've done for us in our lives. At this time, we just want to, we need to ask that You send your Holy Spirit, Lord, to help us through this evening. The week is going by, and many things are unfolding, whether in the world or in our lives, Lord.

And we just want to cast all those things on to You. Would You take those things Lord, that we may be able to focus, Lord, on the word that has been prepared? So bless the word and bless this time, Lord. And thank you so much again. Thank you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen. Good evening to you. Yes, praise the Lord. You can be seated. Thank you.

Welcome! I also want to welcome those of you joining us online. We're so glad that you are. Real quick, before we get started, can you believe that next week is Thanksgiving already? Oh, my goodness.

So anyway, just a friendly reminder that we're not going to have our Bible study next Thursday because it is Thanksgiving. So we'll resume the following week in Jeremiah. And tonight, though, Chapters 37 and 38. And please forgive me, but I have to say it again. Oh, my goodness, these chapters are...oh, man!

You're going to have to bear with me tonight because there's just...it's pretty intense and... But, wow, just very powerful, of course! And there's just so many lessons and takeaways and things by way of application to our lives that are woven into the fabric of these two chapters as we're going to see.

So why don't we pray again, and we'll just ask God to bless our time together in His word. If you would, please join with me. Father in Heaven, thank You, thank You, thank You, thank You, Lord!

O Lord, we're just so thankful to You for this Bible study that we have on Thursday night. It represents for many of us that time in the middle of the week, kind of coming into the weekend where we can just come to this place and just have this time with you in Your

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word, with each other in fellowship and worship and just be fed and ministered to, and calmed and settled, even recalibrated in a way.

We get all out of sorts with all the busyness and stress in our lives, of our lives, and especially with a week like this week, with just so much happening and everything changing so fast. And these are huge developments prophetically in the world, globally. And it just is yet another indicator of how close we are to that trumpet sounding, and Lord, that just encourages us beyond measure.

So Lord, thank You for that. But tonight, Lord, this is the time that we set aside, and we look forward to it. For many of us it's the highlight of our week. I know for me personally, I am in some ways, in a different sort of way look forward more to teaching Thursday night's Bible study than I do Sunday morning, especially the Update.

This is just a special time for us, Lord. And so as we now get into Your word, please, Lord, please, would you just bless our time together? And Lord, we brought to this Bible study many things that only You know about, things in our hearts, heavy, weighing on our hearts. And so, Lord, would You speak to that tonight as only You can and are always so faithful to? And Lord, when You do, oh, we know it's You because only You know that about us.

And so, Lord, thank You for Your word. Bless our time, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen and amen. Thank you, Lord.

All right, so the two chapters that we have before us tonight speak to the matter of in whom or what we place our hope when everything seems so hopeless in the end. And such was the case with Judah at this time, at this juncture. This is the final hour. It's the eve of the Babylonians seizing the city and capturing the people.

Again, as we've been talking about, the book of Jeremiah is not arranged in a chronological order. It's more in a topical order in terms of the arrangement, divinely, the divine arrangement of the chapters back-to-back that speak to the same issue, the same matter.

And again, such is the case with the two chapters that we have tonight. As we're about to see, the desperation on the part of the people, chief of whom is King Zedekiah, will drive them to a false hope and it's going to come screaming out of these chapters.

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So let's begin *verse 1, Jeremiah 37*, **"Now King Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah."**

This was a vassal king, a puppet king installed by Nebuchadnezzar to do his bidding, which explains everything actually.

**"But [Verse 2] neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to the words of the Lord which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah. And [Verse 3] Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Pray now to the Lord our God for us."**

Really? I'm sorry. Oh now you want Jeremiah to pray for you? Isn't that typical? I guess we should be gracious. You know, you're probably more gracious than I am; I'll admit it. But it's just so typical, isn't it? You know, they blow you off, they mock you, they ridicule you, they persecute you, and then, boy, have the Babylonians at the 11th hour, and it looks like it's the end, and now they want prayer.

Well, you have to pray for them. What are you going to say? No, no, you can't, no?

But notice with me the desperation on Zedekiah's part. It's disingenuous. I hope you know that. And the reason is, is that he's still putting his hope in the Egyptians, and he's also still deep down inside holding out hope that somehow Jeremiah would change his message.

That's why he's saying, **"Pray now to the Lord, our God for us,"** translated: Pray and ask the Lord if anything's changed.

Maybe, you know, God will be merciful to us because this wouldn't be the first time that the Egyptians came to the aid of the Israelites there in Judah against their enemies and prevailed. And it's almost like he's saying would you pray, and we do this all the time, by the way, would you pray and ask God to bless our efforts concerning the Egyptians coming to our aid against the Babylonians?

Well, the only problem with that, Zedekiah, is I've been prophesying to you for how many years now that God is going to take Judah captive by the Babylonians? And if you continue to fight for your life, you will lose your life. If you surrender to what God has already ordained, then you'll save your life.

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But Zedekiah doesn't want to hear that. He's hoping deep down inside that something might change.

**“Now [Verse 4] Jeremiah was coming and going among the people, for they had not yet put him in prison. [Meaning they will put him in prison] Then [Verse 5] Pharaoh's army came up from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they departed from Jerusalem.”**

This is a really important detail that we're provided here, and sadly, it can be easily missed at first read. But it's going to be germane to our understanding as it relates to Judah having a sense of relief. Let me explain.

Now, at this juncture, it's the 11th hour, and it's just a matter of time now before the final siege and the Babylonians take Judah captive into Babylon. But because Egypt had now presented themselves and the Chaldeans had heard about Egypt maybe intervening on behalf of Judah they're there outside Jerusalem, the city walls, and they leave to go deal with the Egyptians.

Now, think this through with me. If I'm there in Judah, I'm thinking, wow, thank You, Lord, whew, that was close! We're not on lockdown anymore. Oh, no, we'll see that next, by the way, spoiler alert with Jeremiah. The restrictions have been lifted!

We're, like Jeremiah, we're told here in *verse 4*, we're free to go to and fro, in and out, back and forth wherever we want. We're not - there's no more stay-at-home order because the Chaldeans left to go deal with the Egyptians. So they could have easily, and they did, by the way, misinterpret this short-lived set of circumstances with the Chaldeans leaving and departing from Jerusalem thinking, wow, we're out of the woods. Hey, things are back to normal now. Well, not for long.

**“Then [Verse 6] the word of the Lord came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Thus you shall say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: “Behold, Pharaoh's army which has come up to help you will return to Egypt, to their own land. And the Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city and take it and burn it with fire.”**

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Have a nice afternoon. Wait, what? So you mean to tell me that here I'm thinking: All right! We're free to go about to and fro, we're not under lockdown or stay home, you know, no restrictions and no orders and their gone, and now you're telling me that the army of Pharaoh is going to go back to Egypt and the Chaldeans are going to come back to Judah? And they're not just going to come back to the city of Judah, they're going to fight against the city of Judah, they're going to take the city of Judah, and they're going to burn it, the city of Judah with fire?

This is what happens when we put our hope in the Egypt of the world, Egypt a type of the world, Without exception, we'll get burned, pun intended, okay? You'll always get burnt. If you put your hope in this world, the Egypt of this world, because here, clearly, Judah had put their hope - oh man, the Egyptians are going to come to our rescue again against the Chaldeans.

And here, Jeremiah has been prophesying that we were going to be taken captive and they would besiege the city and destroy the city and burn the city. And now it looks like the Egyptians are going to come to our aid, and it will not happen, and so it's all good now. And then they start getting comfortable and they go back to, maybe better said, return to the putting of their hope in the world, the things of the world.

Hoping in - we have a saying, "hoping against hope." You will always be disappointed. Those who hope in the Lord will never be disappointed.

**Verse 9, "Thus says the Lord: [This is interesting] 'Do not deceive yourselves, saying, "The Chaldeans will surely depart from us," for they will not depart. [Verse 10, oh yeah?] For though you had defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and there remained only wounded men among them, they would rise up, every man in his tent, and burn the city with fire.'**

In other words, yeah, nice try. I mean, I have declared it. My prophet Jeremiah has prophesied it. It will come to pass no matter what. And even if you were somehow able to succeed in some measure in defeating the whole army of the Chaldeans, I would still bring it to pass exactly as I said it would happen. I would even with wounded, buss-up...

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you get the picture? I would raise up the wounded clinging to life. They would rise up, and they would, every single one of them, come out of their tent and come to the city and burn it.

Do you want to know why? Because I said it. That's why. So to think otherwise, to somehow put your hope in anything but what the Lord has declared is to be self-deceived.

Self-deceived: Do you know what self-deceived is? It means, and I know this is deeply profound, that you've deceived yourself. We all have this proclivity, this propensity to actually believe our own lies. We actually all have this ability innate within our sin nature, our Adamic nature to deceive ourselves. We're not being deceived by someone else. We're being deceived by ourselves. And to put your hope in anything or anyone other than God Almighty is to be deceived because you're self-deceived.

***Verse 11, "And it happened, when the army of the Chaldeans left the siege of Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, that Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin to claim his property there among the people."***

Remember this when he bought sight unseen from his cousin some land? This is a real estate acquisition that, you know, he was probably not looking for, but he was the kinsman redeemer, next of kin, so his cousin comes from Anathoth about three miles away.

Picture Judah as, let's say, Judah's - I don't want to say Judah's Kaneohe because it doesn't end well. So, okay, Kaneohe's Anathoth; Kailua's Judah. Of course, I live in Kailua; I don't want to do that either. We'll go to other side of the island, but you get the point. They're like three, four, five miles apart.

So here's Jeremiah - hey, no more lockdown, no more stay-at-home order, we're free to go about, I think I'm going to go see what I bought. And also, it seems that they're going to be having a meeting about this property.

And I better be there to claim my rightful ownership of this property. Because after all, the Chaldeans' news has traveled and the Chaldeans have departed, and so maybe this property that Jeremiah bought might have some value.

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Now, when he bought it, it was of no value. You couldn't get rid of it. He'd have to pay somebody to take it. And so when Jeremiah bought it by faith, we knew about the "why" behind that "what," but he buys this property, and now they're possibly trying to figure out how to take this property from Jeremiah. So he has this need now to go there and claim his property among the people.

Now, *verse 13*, **"And when he was in the Gate of Benjamin, [He doesn't get very far] a captain of the guard was there whose name was Irijah the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he seized Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "You are defecting to the Chaldeans!"**

**Then Jeremiah said [Verse 14] "False! I am not defecting to the Chaldeans." But he did not listen to him. So Irijah seized Jeremiah and brought him to the princes. Therefore [Verse 15] the princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe. For they had made that the prison."**

Okay. Man, I just...oh, man, Jeremiah.

Okay, first of all, at this point, Jeremiah's probably - well, actually about my age, 60 years old. But keep in mind that 60 years of age in that day was not like 60 years of age today. That's my story, and I'm sticking with it.

But in that day, they had a lot of miles on them by the time they reached 60, if they reached 60. And you consider the rough and hard - and it was a hard life back then. And so you've got some miles on you by that time. And he's an older man now. He's not in his 20s anymore like he was when God first called him. So some 40 years has passed.

Now, why is this important? Because he's still getting beaten. I think of the Apostle Paul. I don't know; maybe this is...Well, I think it's good in a not-so-easy way for us to imagine with our God-given imagination.

Can you imagine what the Apostle Paul looked like? I mean, his face was marred and scarred. You know, many times he had been beaten and stoned and whipped? I just picture him bearing the battle scars of Christ all over his body. I would venture to say that people would wince when they would see him. He just looked hideous. All of the years - how about the shipwrecks? You don't think that takes a toll on you?

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Now, here we are with Jeremiah, man, he's been through so much. You don't come out of that unscathed, unscarred.

So here he is as an elderly man, which that's another topic for another time. It is shameful that the elders, the elderly are so mistreated in our day, so disrespected. We just want to put them away. You know how much wisdom is in those gray hairs? Again, that's my story, and I'm sticking with it.

So first of all, he's an elder, he's an older man, and they're beating him and punching him, and then they imprison him. We're going to see this in a little bit, but this is no ordinary prison. This is actually going to be a dungeon. And by the way, he's put in prison and left there to die.

**“When Jeremiah [Verse 16] entered [And here it is] the dungeon and the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days, then Zedekiah the king sent and took him out. The king asked him secretly in his house, and said, “Is there any word from the Lord?” [This is déjà vu all over again]**

**And Jeremiah said, “There is.” [Oh, man, he's getting his hopes up] [Okay, what is it?]**

**[Then Jeremiah said] “You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon!”**

I love Jeremiah! So, wait just a minute. Stay with me on this, very important.

If I'm Jeremiah, I totally wouldn't have done that. I mean, are you kidding me now? I'm 60 years old, okay, really more like 80 in that day, if not more. I'm walking with a limp. I hurt all over, and I don't have any kind of pain reliever, you know, over-the-counter pain reliever. I'm just - I'm in constant pain. I can't sleep because of the pain. I'm still bleeding from the wounds. And it's just...it's horrible.

And now the king has sent for me and he's asking me, Hey, secretly, privately, Jeremiah, uh, anything changed? He's hoping. He's hoping that Jeremiah's time in this empty pit of a dungeon would have had an attitude adjustment and would have changed his mind and with his changed mind also changed his message.

I would have been tempted. I have to confess. And you would have to if you're honest with yourself and not self-deceived. You'd have to admit, right, under those conditions, in that



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kind of a situation, I mean, I'd try to maybe see if I could somehow just kind of, you know, soften the blow, but not Jeremiah.

As a matter of fact, King, I do have a word from the Lord. You're going to die. You're going to be delivered to the hand of the king. Here's the word I have for you. It's the same word. The word has not changed. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. When are you going to get that through your thick skull, Zedekiah?

I'm really angry at Zedekiah right now.

***“Moreover [Verse 18] Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “What offense have I committed against you, against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison? [Question, verse 19] Where now are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you or against this land’?”***

Good question. Zedekiah, your false prophets have been contradicting me and the prophecies in the word of the Lord for all of these years. Have they ever one time been right? Not one time.

Every time they open their ugly mouths - that's mean - whatever. I'm still angry, I guess, but it's a righteous anger, of course, because pastors have righteous anger. But every time they open their mouths, their lying mouths and they prophesy and say, No, the Babylonians aren't...Don't listen to Jeremiah. It's not going to happen.

Has it ever not happened, as they said, even one time?

Answer: No. Let me ask you another question, follow-up question if you don't mind, King. Has what I prophesied in the name of the Lord has every single one, has every single time I've opened my mouth and spoken and prophesied in the name of the Lord God, has there ever been one time that it did not happen?

Answer: No. Case closed. So stop asking me to water-down, soften-up, and change my message because this is the message. And it's the same yesterday, it's the same today, and it's going to be the same thing when you get up tomorrow morning.

Now, if you are going to insist - boy, I'm really upset about...if you're going to insist, Zedekiah, on continuing, and he's going to do this again, by the way, just so you know, as

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we'll see, if you're going to insist on bringing me to you privately hoping, hoping to hear something different, I can save you and I the time and just tell you nothing's different. In fact, let's just re-watch the video online of the Prophecy Update because that's the same, you know, that's...

Okay, I'm taking it too far. Whatever.

*Verse 20*; now we're going to get real. And you got to really appreciate and respect and love this about Jeremiah. **"Therefore please hear now, O my lord the king. Please, let my petition be accepted before you, and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there."** [*I'm an old man, man*]

**Then [*Verse 21*] Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah to the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread from the bakers' street."**

Which is what they would do; they would name the street after what it was. Church Street. Baker Street. That's where all the bakeries were; that's where all the churches were.

So take him; don't send him back to that dungeon, that pit, that empty cistern - we'll talk about that more in a moment. Just take him to the court of the prison, and go ahead and give him bread to eat, which means that heretofore he was not even given bread to eat.

**"Until all the bread in the city was gone."**

See, they're living on their reserve right now. Both food and water supply has been cut off by the Chaldeans, which was the strategy in that day. We talked about that, very important takeaway from that, by the way. The way the enemy will take down a city is to cut off the water supply, and it's just a matter of time because they're on their reserve water, their reserve food. They starve them out, and that's how they would capture them.

And that's what the enemy does in our lives. He cuts off the water of God's word, the water supply. And he also cuts off the food supply, the bread of life. And it's just a matter of time.

You can start your - that's so antiquated. There's an app for that; I guess you just start the app, and anyway...

And that's what they had done.

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And then we're told, **"Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison."**

And this is how the chapter ends, with Zedekiah granting Jeremiah's request. But don't think for a second that this is done and granted out of compassion or mercy or empathy. It is not. Do you know why Zedekiah did this? So he wouldn't have the blood on his hands. He did - he's trying here by doing this to distance himself as far as he can from Jeremiah's death being blamed on him. He doesn't want that on him.

Now, this is very applicable in our day, I'm sad to say, because there is distance between the death and the blame for the death. And you get enough of a separation between the two, and you cannot point the finger at the cause. He does not want the finger of blame pointed at him for Jeremiah's death. That's why he does this. That's why he's granting Jeremiah this

**"Now [Chapter 38:1] Shephatiah the son of Mattan, Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, saying, [Verse 2, imagine as I read this, and you follow along. [This is done with a mocking and ridiculing tone, a scorn, a disdain in their voice]**

**"Thus says the Lord: 'He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, but he who goes over to the Chaldeans shall live. His life shall be as a prize to him, and he shall live.' Thus says the Lord: 'This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.'**

**" Therefore [Verse 4] the princes said to the king, "Please, let this man be put to death [And here's why, listen] for thus he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. [He's not good for morale] For this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm."**

I mean, I don't even know where to start on this one. Well, let's just jump in. This is wrong on every level! The accusation is false. This false accusation and plot to kill the prophet is because he prophesies doom and gloom. And it's really starting to bring down the morale of those that are still fighting against the Chaldeans.

Oh, they're still fighting against the Chaldeans? Well, why are you still fighting against the Chaldeans? Do you want to - do you have a death wish? Why aren't you surrendering to the

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Chaldeans? You're fighting to save your life. You're going to lose your life. You lose your life and surrender; you'll save your life. That's the principle.

So that's one of many problems here. But the overarching problem is that they wanted to silence this prophet because they did not want to hear what he would have to say, speaking such words to them. We need to shut him up once and for all.

And here's the thing, King: Jeremiah is not concerned about the welfare of the people. The opposite is true. He seeks instead to harm them, to if you prefer, scare them, discourage them, weaken them.

I mean, I don't know how it's even possible to get any further from the polar opposite of the truth. What Jeremiah was prophesying as doom and gloom as it was and needed to be, I might add, was actually their only hope.

See, they were falsely accusing Jeremiah of preaching this message of doom and gloom and no hope. The opposite is true. The doom and gloom is: This is coming, and if you want any hope, your only hope of getting out of this is the word of God and in our case, the rapture of the church.

We're going to talk about that Sunday. By the way, Sunday, oh, man, if I had only known what this week held in store, and even just this morning, I would really covet your prayers. This Prophecy Update on Sunday is going to be one of the most intense and I would even venture to say important Prophecy Updates that I've done in quite some time, at least that I can remember.

For those of you that have been following the events of this last week, I mean, it is just breathtaking. Breathtaking. So I'm titling the Prophecy Update 'Painted Into the Prophetic Corner.' And it's all by prophesied design if I can say it like that.

And it's doom and gloom guaranteed or your tithe back if you want. But it's the truth. But that should lead us all to the hope.

So Judah, you think Jeremiah has been doing these prophecy updates for all these years to scare you. No, it's to prepare you for the hope of restoration. According to the Word of the Lord, it's exact opposite.

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I remember - one real quick thing here, and I am cognizant of the time, but I remember when we first moved here, and I started doing the Prophecy Updates. It's been - I don't know how many years now, 17 years, more?

Anyway, I would get interviewed, and I was asked, you know, sometimes on a TV broadcast or radio broadcast, I was asked: You know, when you when you talk about Bible prophecy, you give people hope, right? Because synonymous with Bible prophecy is doom, gloom, fire, brimstone, judgment, death, burning the city.

And I've always been taken back by that insinuation and even accusation because it is wrong on every level. Because the implication is that when you talk about Bible prophecy, you are not going to encourage people and give people hope. And that is exactly what teaching Bible prophecy does. It's our only hope!

And Jeremiah's saying, listen, if you want hope, your only hope is this. And be encouraged. And they're accusing him and wanting to kill him.

**"Then [Verse 5] Zedekiah the king said, "Look, he is in your hand."**

I mean, Zedekiah is probably just sitting back going, "Yes!" Because when he sought for Jeremiah and asked Jeremiah privately, hey, is there anything changed, can you - is there any word from the Lord?

Yes, there is, as a matter of fact, Zedekiah, you're going to die. Nothing's changed.

So he then didn't want Jeremiah's death on him. And so what does he do here? This is a perfect opportunity for him to once again wash his hands of Jeremiah's death. Look, he is in your hand. Whatever you do, it's not on me.

**"For the king can do nothing against you." So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malachi, the king's son, which was in the court of the prison and [Look at this detail] they let Jeremiah down with ropes."**

Wow! Wait, why didn't they just throw him down there to his death? He's already weak, frail, old, injured. Why did they lower him down with the ropes?

Answer: They wanted him to suffer a slow, brutal, cruel, agonizing death. And if they would have thrown Jeremiah in that empty cistern, which had been once filled with water, that has

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run out now because it had been cut off, and all that remained in there, as we'll see in a moment, and in the dungeon, there was no water but mire, it's just an empty cistern, very deep, very cold, very dark and full of mud. So Jeremiah's sank in the mire.

So that way now they can wash their hands of Jeremiah's death. If they would have thrown him in there, then they would have been responsible for killing him. No, we didn't kill him. We just lowered him down, you know, because we're so merciful with ropes, and he died in the dungeon as everyone dies in the dungeon, so you can't blame us.

Now there's something else here, real quick. This cowering and acquiescing to condemning and killing an innocent man is reminiscent of Pilate who would do the same to the God man. **"I find no fault in this man."**

And he tried to wash his hands of it, and like Zedekiah in a grander and greater way, obviously sought to distance himself from the death of Jesus on the cross so that he could wash his...

So he put it on the Jews so that he could somehow not have the blame for Christ's death laid at his feet or on his hands.

I love how one commentator noted this, and I probably should be careful here because I'll get angry at Zedekiah again. I've just calmed down, so...

But this guy is a weasel, man. He is a weak weasel, and I'll find a couple more W words, if I can, that aren't bad, but maybe you can help me out. But this, guy, this, this - what a coward. What a weak man. He's not even a man. He's a mouse.

One commentator said, "He has no backbone; he has a wishbone." You know, he wishes, he hopes. Okay, so whatever you guys do, that's why he's in your hand. I mean, I can say nothing, you know, I could do nothing against you, and wash my hands of this, go ahead. Do whatever you're going to do. It's all on me. It's going to get worse, by the way.

Now *verse 7*, You're going to be introduced to this amazing guy, Ebed-Melech. Now, this is not necessarily his name, but could very well be his title because Ebed-Melech means "servant of the king."

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And we're told that **"He was an Ethiopian and one of the eunuchs who was in the king's house. And he heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon. When the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin [Verse 8], Ebed-Melech went out of the king's house and spoke to the king, saying: "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."**

He's going to starve to death. Now, here's the king; could you imagine Zedekiah? Oh, he deserves every bit of it. Man, I just - just when I thought I got rid of this guy! And here comes this Ethiopian guy.

**"Then the king commanded [Verse 10] Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, "Take from here thirty men with you, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies." So [Verse 11] Ebed-Melech took the men with him, 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."**

We're going to see why here in a moment. But there's something I want to draw your attention to, and it is enormous, for lack of a better word. And it really hit me today as I was preparing for the study tonight. Think about this. God uses a hopeful foreigner to rescue a godly prophet from a hopeless pit, from an evil king who has mal intent being hopelessly deceived.

Did you get that? We have a saying: "Boy, you sure find out who your true friends are." And let's just talk about Jeremiah for a moment here because he's a real man like you and me. He has feelings. He has emotions. He's really hurting, not just physically. You got to know he's hurting emotionally. I mean, he is so down, literally down in the mire, the miry clay.

And I mean, he may very well have been at the point where he's like, okay, enough already, like the many men of God before him. I think of Elijah: He's like, okay, Lord, enough already, just kill me. Just, you know, just kill me.

The Apostle Paul: This brings me great encouragement, by the way, when I read about men like Elijah and the Apostle Paul. I'll just use them as examples. But when I read things like

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the Apostle Paul saying that he despaired even of life, he didn't want to live anymore. It got so bad.

Job: Same thing. They're in good company. And I got to believe; though it's not recorded for us in the narrative, I got to believe that Jeremiah's down there thinking, Well, Lord, I was faithful to Your calling on my life at great cost to my life. But I didn't waver, Lord. And now here I am.

And like Joseph before him, by the way, who was also cast into a dungeon of a pit, left there to die, you got to know these - and I got to admit again to my own shame that if I'm in that pit, I'm complaining. I'm questioning God: Why? Here I've served You faithfully. I've not wavered. And here I am in the bottom of this pit.

And that was basically what Elijah did. Again, that's why I feel really good about and encouraged by guys like Elijah, because I would have done the same thing. That's what Elijah - he complained. Lord!

You know, he's running from God, and he wants to die, And he runs - well, he's got a contract out on his life from Ahab and Jezebel, just on the heels of this, I mean, miraculous victory over the prophets of Baal. He's hiding in a cave, and God comes to him and, well, He knows the answer, but He says, Elijah, what are you doing here?

I would have said, Well, everybody's got to be somewhere. I'm here. You know why - yeah - I told you. You know why I'm here, Lord. I mean, what is going on here, Lord? I mean, I have, You know, done all of these things. And here I am now, and I'm going to get...

He's disappointed with God, by the way. He fully expected that God was going to also have Ahab and Jezebel killed. But He doesn't. He's disenchanted. He's disgruntled. And here he's been faithful.

And the Lord responds to him: "Elijah." Okay, I've got 7000 like you that have not bent their knee to Baal. Get up. Get out of here. Get going.

Anyway, that's a...I didn't mean to...I have no time to talk more about that, though I would love to.



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But I got to wonder about Jeremiah at this point. Has he just kind of given up hope? I wonder what it would have been like at this point when he sees, and he probably knew this guy, this Ethiopian, and then all of a sudden, this guy shows up with 30 men.

Why 30 men?

Okay, this is why it's important information when we see it in the text. These men have not had a lot of food to eat. They're very thin. They're very weak. And if he's stuck in the mire, which he is, it would take that many men to get him out of that well, that cistern, that mire.

**So verse 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. So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison."**

Again, interesting detail, right? Why? Because this Ethiopian knew wisely that if they would have lowered the ropes and Jeremiah in his condition at his age, were to just straddle those ropes under his arms, that just the pressure and the suction from that mire that he was stuck in, it would have ripped his arms off. At the very least it would have caused extensive injury to his body, his already injured body.

So he has him - he lowers them down first. Imagine Jeremiah when he sees the ropes, the men, the Ethiopian. And here comes the ropes with these clothes and rags. I'm thinking Jeremiah knows exactly why they're lowering those down. So he's going to put them underneath, so they don't injure him.

And it's going to really kind of seek to be a buffer from the pressure when they - 30 guys, well, 31 counting Ebed-Melech, right, are going to pull him up by those ropes, by his arms with those clothes and rags under his armpits, and they're going to get him out. I mean, the care and the compassion with which he rescues an old, weak, starving, and frail, faithful prophet Jeremiah.

**Verse 14, "Then Zedekiah the king [Oh, here we go again] sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him at the third entrance of the house of the Lord. And the king said to Jeremiah, "I will ask you something. [Deja vu all over again - again!] Hide nothing from me."**

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**Jeremiah [Verse 15] said to Zedekiah, “If I declare it to you, will you not surely put me to death? And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me.”**

This is a textbook case of Catch-22.

Come on, man, you’re killing me; literally, you’re killing me, Zedekiah. I mean, what in the world are you thinking? What are you hoping? Oh, I know what you’re hoping. So you’ve brought me here and you’re hoping - now if I tell you the truth, that’s not what you’re hoping to hear, that’s not what you’re wanting to hear, you’re going to kill me.

And even if you don’t kill me, you’re not going to listen to me. So why bother, Zedekiah? I mean, let’s just replay the video of the word of God, the prophecies.

Now, clearly, Zedekiah is still holding out hope for a different outcome. And lest we be too quick to come down too hard on him, would you agree that this is alive and well today?

I just wonder, and you’ll forgive me. But we just experienced it yet again putting our hope in an election, hoping for a different outcome. I mean, even if hypothetically, theoretically, we get our guy in office.

Okay, been there, done that, bought the T-shirt and the hat, two-for-one. No, nothing’s going to change. Are you still putting your hope in that? You’re going to get burned! I promise you on the authority of God’s word. Are you still hoping for a different outcome? Okay, Zedekiah.

**“So [Are you angry again?] Zedekiah, the king, swore secretly to Jeremiah, saying, “As the Lord lives, who made our very souls, I will not put you to death, nor will I give you into the hand of these men who seek your life.”**

**Then Jeremiah said that Zedekiah, [Okay, here goes] “Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon’s princes, then your soul shall live; this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live.**

**But if [Verse 18] you do not surrender to the king of Babylon’s princes, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans; they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand.””**

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Well, do you think Zedekiah was hoping for something different? Of course he was. This response from Jeremiah was again the only hope [keyword: hope] for Jerusalem and it would come vis-à-vis surrendering to the inevitable.

You know, we want to keep fighting, right? We want to keep this world on life support, right? We want to keep this country. I know I'm treading on some very dangerous ground right now, but we want to save America.

My Bible tells me what's going to happen, and it's inevitable. And you want to fight against it? Go ahead. You want to fight? Keep fighting; keep this thing going, man. Well, not me. I already know how it ends. And any attempt or effort - I just think of the amount of energy and time and resources. Just the time; let's just talk about time, just indulge me, please, and we're almost done. Please. I appreciate your patience.

I just think about the time. Forget the money, forget that everything else. Just the time alone that was spent on an election. For what? For what? Oh, Pastor, there you go again. Are you saying we shouldn't vote?

No! I'm saying vote if you want, but don't put your hope in the election or the person you're voting for and stop fighting to keep it on life support. It's inevitable. Let go of it.

I'm really in trouble. See, I don't have next week, so I have to make up for next week.

**So verse 19, "And Zedekiah the king said to Jeremiah, [Listen to this] "I am afraid of the Jews who have defected to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they abuse me." But Jeremiah said, "They shall not deliver you. Please, [Please] obey the voice of the Lord which I speak to you. So it shall be well with you, and your soul shall live.**

*[Jeremiah really cares, doesn't he?]*

**But [Here it is again, verse 21] if you refuse to surrender, this is the word that the Lord has shown me: 'Now behold, all the women who are left in the king of Judah's house shall be surrendered to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say: "Your close friends have set upon you and prevailed against you; your feet have sunk in the mire, and they have turned away again." 'So [Verse 23] they shall surrender all your wives and children to the Chaldeans. You shall not escape from their hand but shall be taken by the**

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**hand of the king of Babylon. And you shall cause this city *[You shall cause this city]* to be burned with fire.”**

**Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Let no one know of these words, and you shall not die. But *[Verse 25]* if the princes hear that I have talked with you, and they come to you and say to you, ‘Declare to us now what you have said to the king, and also what the king said to you; Do not hide it from us and we will not put you to death.**

**Then *[Verse 26]* you shall say to them *[This is Zedekiah telling Jeremiah]* ‘I presented my request before the king, that he would not make me return to Jonathan’s house to die there.”**

What’s going on here? Well, Zedekiah, true to form, is more concerned about what people will think of him than he is about what God has declared will happen to him. That’s called the fear of man. And it’s a trap. It’s a snare. Your only hope is to please man because of your fear of man.

***Verse 27*, “Then all the princes came to Jeremiah and asked him. And he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they stopped speaking with him, for the conversation had not been heard. *[They didn’t have any witnesses to what was said]***

**Now *[Verse 28]* Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken. And he was there when Jerusalem was taken.”**

That’s key. So what an astounding end to the chapter and with it, the Bible study. Notice with me, in closing, the contrast between Jeremiah, who has a future and a hope, and Zedekiah who has neither.

That’s the takeaway. Might be an oversimplification, but I’ll end the way we began. In whom or what have you and I put our hope? Are we still holding out hope? Are we still holding on to hope? And if so, in what or whom is that hope?

I think it’s pretty clear. And sadly, Zedekiah, when they would come, would be taken exactly as Jeremiah prophesied, according to the word of the Lord.

And who in the end had the hope? Jeremiah. Jeremiah. Oh, God is so good.

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Kapono, come on up. Why don't you stand up? Thanks for your patience; again, I know I went a little bit long. I never do that, right? Again, we don't have next week, so that's my story, and I'm sticking with it.

Lord, wow, just wow! Just no words, really. What a powerful lesson tonight. Lord, I pray, and I do believe that what we've heard here in Your word will not fall on deaf ears or hard hearts or dull ears for that matter, but rather that we would take heed because everything that we saw here in these two chapters, in particular, what we saw with this Zedekiah resides in every single one of us, hoping in the world, fearing of man. The list is as endless as it is exhaustive.

So Lord, as we close now, please, we're really looking to You and relying upon You to, by the Holy Spirit, take this now and begin that process as hard as it might be, or difficult, or uncomfortable even and convicting just begin that process of applying it to our lives and the blessing of it to our hearts Lord, thank You for Jeremiah. Thank You so much for this man and this record we have of this man.

Thank You, Lord; we love You so much, in Jesus' name. Amen.