

Message #24**Jeremiah 20:1-18**

Jeremiah had just completed a powerful visual and verbal message to the people of God that said God was the sovereign potter and the people were the clay, and that God was fed up with the way His people turned out so He had Jeremiah take a clay pot and smash it to smithereens, in front of the chief priests and leaders as an illustration of what He was going to do to His own people.

After Jeremiah did that, he went to the courtyard at the Lord's house in the Temple and told them exactly what God was going to do. He was going to bring one calamity after another on them from all different angles. He would bring his "entire calamity" package on His people.

Well standing off in the wings listening to this was a priest whose name was Pashhur. He did not like what Jeremiah was saying. He did not like what he was prophesying. Jeremiah was a real threat to his way of life. He was part of the religious hierarchy and what Jeremiah was saying was something that could really upset his career. He did not like what he was hearing.

WHEN A MAN OF GOD PRESENTS THE TRUTH OF GOD, SOME OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO HATE THE TRUTH OF GOD WILL HATE THE ONE PRESENTING THE TRUTH OF GOD AND SEEK TO SILENCE HIM.

When God presents a message through a person telling the truth, there will be those who hate it and will hate the one telling them the truth. They not only hate that the one telling them the truth, they want him gone and will do what they can do to get rid of him.

The message that Jeremiah was presenting to the people was something that made Pashhur mad. There are six historical facts we need to see:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – The priest hears Jeremiah prophesying the word of God. **20:1**

Pashhur was the priest, the son of Immer, who was the chief officer in the house of the LORD. Apparently Pashhur had a son whose name was Gedaliah (38:1). The name Immer was the name of a family of priests and Pashhur was high up the ladder.

So Pashhur was a top guy. What Pashhur heard was that Jeremiah was prophesying "these things." That entire calamity warning and package Jeremiah had been preaching was what he had been hearing. He did not like the Potter and smashed pot illustration. It didn't fit with his theology.

We need to understand that Pashhur is a priest and chief overseer in the Temple and he also was a **false prophet (20:6)**. He had been prophesying phony things. He had been telling people that they were fine and God loved them and would always bless them. He was part of the clergy that proclaimed a prosperity and peace gospel. What Jeremiah was predicting was exactly the opposite of what he had been proclaiming.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – The priest arrests and beats Jeremiah and puts him in stocks. **20:2**

This is the first time in his life that he has actually been arrested. He is arrested for telling the truth. Now carefully observe that Jeremiah is identified as “Jeremiah the prophet.” What that means is that when Pashhur did these things to Jeremiah, he knew that he was a prophet of God and so did everyone else.

What he did was arrest Jeremiah, beat Jeremiah and then he put him in stocks.

Pashhur may have had someone give Jeremiah 40 lashes, which was permitted against wicked men according to the law—Deuteronomy 25:3. After he beat him, he had him put in stocks.

The Hebrew word “stocks” (mahpeketh) is one that means to cause distortions by putting someone in a crooked position. The word is only used here and in Jeremiah 29:26. So this confinement was some form of torture that put Jeremiah in a painful position. It may be very much like stocks that lock up your hands, feet and head.

What we do know from the text is that the stocks were located in “the upper part of Benjamin’s gate,” which would mean all people could look up and see him. It was very painful and humiliating and very public.

Now of course we would ask why he is doing this. The reason is that he knows he is a prophet of God and he also knows that Jeremiah is telling the truth of God and **he does not like what he is hearing and he doesn’t want others to hear it either**. Jeremiah is not preaching a message of love, forgiveness, toleration and blessing, and Pashhur does not like it. That was what he had been telling people and it was not the truth. Pashhur is a religious fraud and liar and Jeremiah is a true man of God.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – The priest releases Jeremiah the next day. **20:3a**

God does not allow His faithful people to be mistreated for very long. He carefully watches over them and He will intervene in their behalf and for Jeremiah, He did the next day. When Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den, God protected him and delivered him the next day. When Jonah was in the fish, God delivered him in three days. When Shadrach, Meschech and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace, God delivered them shortly after it happened. God may permit His faithful people to experience some negative things, but He will also deliver them.

We must ask ourselves why Pashhur released Jeremiah the next day. He obviously changed his mind and calmed down, but behind it was the Sovereignty of God turning his mind to release him.

When we find ourselves under attack for being faithful to God, keep waiting and watching because God will come to the aid of His faithful people.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – Jeremiah informs the priest what God will do to him. **20:3b-6**

When Jeremiah was released, he did not give Pashhur a loving message. He had something to say to him. In fact, there are seven messages he gives to Pashhur.

Jeremiah is not a man who is afraid to look someone in the eyes and tell them the truth. His actions against Jeremiah were actions that show what was in his heart.

Message #1 - God has renamed you. **20:3b**

Now when God renames someone, it is not a light matter. Often times God would change a name for good, but that was not the case this time. Many times God would change a name from bad to good; **but here it is from good to bad.**

The name of the priest is Pashhur. Many O.T. scholars have tried to figure out what the name Pashhur means. Some conclude it means “ease” or “tranquility.” But regardless of what the name Pashhur means, God was changing it.

Jeremiah said that is not the name the Lord calls you anymore. He calls you “Magor-mishsabib” which means **“terror from every side.”** From now on **people will realize that you are surrounded by evil and terror on every side and you are responsible for the terror they will experience.**

In our culture we don’t typically change names, except in a marriage.

But before God, our name is known for something. What is it?

Message #2 - God will make you a terror to yourself. **20:4a**

God would allow the fear of terror to overtake him. He would be terrified from every angle. God would surround him with an overwhelming sense of fear and terror from every angle.

Message #3 - God will make you a terror to all your friends. **20:4b**

Many of Pashhur’s friends would not want to be around him anymore because they would realize the terror that surrounded him. God can cause people to look favorably on you or He can cause them to be against you.

Message #4 - God will allow you to see all of your friends killed. **20:4c**

Pashhur would be responsible for what he would see happen to his own friends.

Message #5 - God will allow you to see the Babylonians capture and kill all Judah. **20:4d**

Jeremiah specifically names whom God will use to smash and crush His own people. F. B. Huey made an interesting observation in his commentary on Jeremiah. He said that “Babylon is not mentioned in chaps. 1-19 but is found 170 times in chaps. 20-52. The next highest occurrences of the word is in 2 Kings (thirty-three times), Ezekiel (seventeen times), and Daniel (seventeen times)” (*Jeremiah Lamentations*, p. 191).

This evil sin of rejecting the word of God would be the cause of God allowing Babylon to take charge of the world.

Message #6 - God will allow you to see Babylon take away all your wealth. **20:5**

The wealth of the city and people would be taken away. The priest would lose his nice cushy life.

Message #7 - God will allow you and all connected to you to be taken captive and killed. **20:6**

Pashhur had terrorized Jeremiah so God says I will terrorize you in every way.

Jeremiah wants to make sure that Pashhur realizes God will specifically target him. He would be taken captive by the Babylonians, he would be taken to Babylon and he would die there.

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Jeremiah struggles with his calling as a prophet. **20:7-10**

Jeremiah really struggled with all of this. He was very discouraged with what was happening and what he was seeing. He had been arrested and was placed in stocks and became the laughing stock of everyone.

Jeremiah did not like his job anymore. He is a prophet of God whose job it is to proclaim the truth of God and when he did that, he was not only disliked, but he got arrested, beaten and mocked. As he thought about this, he basically thought I am sick of this job.

So in **verses 7-8** he accuses God of deceiving him. He basically says I go out and speak for you and am the laughing stock of all the people. They don't respect me or listen to me. Jeremiah was thinking You promised (Jer. 1:8) to deliver me and I end up alone, afraid and hurting.

Jeremiah knew that the reason for his trouble was because the message he is proclaiming is not a message of grace, but of judgment. Jeremiah says my whole message is about judgment, destruction and violence. As a result of that, people mock me all day long. They ridicule me and physically abuse me. Jeremiah did not want to preach anymore.

According to **verses 9-10**, Jeremiah must have decided I am not going to do this job anymore. I am not going to speak anymore. All I do is talk about pending judgment and disaster because people will not turn from evil. I know if I speak, people will laugh and I will be beaten up.

There are ministers today who refuse to preach on the subject of pending judgment because they know it will not make them popular with the people. It is a negative message. Jeremiah says that is my entire message.

But in **verse 9** Jeremiah says my problem is when I purpose to be silent, then my heart blazes like a burning fire that it is my responsibility to proclaim the truth. I cannot seem to hold it in anymore.

In fact, even “all my trusted friends” watch and wait for him to fall. His own friends were waiting for the moment Jeremiah would be gone.

HISTORICAL FACT #6 – Jeremiah remembers the truth about God. **20:11-13**

The key to getting out of depression is to remember the truth about God. There are five truths that God brought to Jeremiah’s mind that kept him going and not quitting:

Truth #1 - God is with Jeremiah. **20:11a**

This is a central key to survival for God’s people—the realization that God is with them. God was watching over Jeremiah and was his own personal and “powerful bodyguard.”

Truth #2 - God will punish Jeremiah’s persecutors. **20:11b**

God will cause them to stumble and end up totally ashamed. Ultimately they will end up with an “everlasting disgrace that will not be forgotten.”

Truth #3 - God does test the righteous. **20:12a**

Jeremiah came to realize that he could view negative things as a test coming from God to see whether or not he would remain faithful and stay the course. God allows His faithful people to go through difficult times and trials to test their minds and hearts.

Truth #4 - God may let His faithful people see Him pour out his vengeance. **20:12b**

Jeremiah believed that God would permit him to see God pour out His vengeance on their enemies. Here he prays for that. He asks God to let him see it.

Truth #5 - God will cause His faithful people to sing praises to Him. **20:13**

Faithful persecuted people will be singing praises people. The reason for the praise is that God has delivered His people from the evildoers. Jeremiah came to understand that eventually God's faithful people will be singing praises for how He delivered them and destroyed their enemies.

HISTORICAL FACT #7 – Jeremiah falls back into deep depression about his own life.
20:14-18

Even though Jeremiah knew this great truth about God, these personal attacks took a toll on him.

Jeremiah knew sound doctrine and truth, but he also had human emotions. He again slipped into deep, horrible, dark despair. He was at an emotional low here. He wishes he had never been born (**20:14**). He wished his father, Hilkiah, had never been told he had a son, which was usually cause for great rejoicing (**20:15**). He said my ministry is so rough, I can't understand why God did not kill me at birth or before birth. He did not know why God did not destroy him like one of the cities (**20:16-17**).

He said my entire life has been spent in shame and sorrow. I have had nothing but trouble all of my life (**20:18**).

As near as we may determine, this will be the last time that Jeremiah will complain like this, but in this text, he did complain to the Lord. He was not a robot. Jeremiah was a great man of God and he was really hurting here. He was beaten and jailed because he told the truth of God.

What does God expect of us in this dark, depraved world that hates truth, hates God's word and mocks God? What does God expect of us as we see evil things happening all around us?

He expects us to be steady and faithful and continue to proclaim His word. He expects us to warn that if people do not turn from their evil and sin, He will destroy them. That is what God expected Jeremiah to do and that is what He expects us to do.

As we do that, we will see Him do some amazing things with us and for us.