

## **Dissembling in Prayer** **Jeremiah 42:1-6, 19-22**

In Jeremiah 42:1-3 we read, *“Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, and said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:) that the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.”* Herein this remnant of Judah presented their request for prayer that the Lord their God might direct them in the way that He would have them to go. Yea, they made request for prayer that the Lord might direct them in the way of His will in order that they might obediently walk therein. Certainly, this was a good request to make. Certainly, this was the right request to make.

Yet after having revealed the Lord’s answer to their request in Jeremiah 42:7-18, the prophet Jeremiah then presented a significant rebuke against this remnant of Judah. Even so, in Jeremiah 42:19-20 he proclaimed, *“The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day. For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it.”* Herein the prophet Jeremiah accused this remnant of having dissembled in their hearts as they expressed their request for prayer. Now, to dissemble in one’s heart means to attempt to manipulate another by concealing one’s true motives under a false appearance. Even so, this remnant of Judah dissembled in their prayer request before the Lord God. Yea, they sought to manipulate the Lord God through prayer, appearing to desire His will concerning their way, while having already decided what way they intended to go. Indeed, they sought to manipulate the Lord God through prayer into agreeing with that which they already desired and had already decided.

### **THE RIGHT APPEARANCE**

#### **Expressing the Right Concern**

In Jeremiah 42:1-3 this remnant of Judah did indeed express the right concern in prayer – *“Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, and said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:) that the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.”* They expressed the concern in prayer to know the will of the Lord. They expressed the concern in prayer to be directed in the way of the Lord’s will. They expressed the concern in prayer for the Lord to reveal His will and way unto them in order that they might walk in His way and obey His will. Certainly, this is the right concern to express in our prayer lives before the Lord our God.

## **Expressing the Right Commitment**

In Jeremiah 42:4 Jeremiah the prophet indicated that he would pray unto the Lord God for them and that he would reveal the whole counsel of the Lord's answer, keeping nothing back from them. *"Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you."* Even so, in Jeremiah 42:5-6 this remnant of Judah expressed the right commitment to the Lord's answer – *"Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God."* They expressed the commitment to obey the Word of the Lord in this matter. They expressed the commitment to obey the Lord completely, to do according to all that the Lord God would instruct them through the prophet Jeremiah. They expressed the commitment to obey the Lord certainly, whether the Lord's instruction be "good" and to their liking, or whether the Lord's instruction be "evil" and against their liking. Certainly, this is the right commitment to express in our prayer lives before the Lord our God.

## **Expressing the Right Confidence**

Indeed, in the closing portion of Jeremiah 42:6, this remnant of Judah expressed the right confidence concerning the Lord's will – *"That it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God."* They expressed the confidence that the Lord's will and way for them, as revealed by His Word, would truly be unto their well-being. They expressed the confidence in the Lord that His will and way would truly be the best way for them and the blessed way for them. They expressed the confidence that the Lord's way would be the way of His favor upon them, and thus would be the best way that they might choose. Certainly, this is the right confidence to express in our prayer lives before the Lord our God.

## **THE WRONG AFFECTION**

### **Harboring the Wrong Calculation**

Yet in all of their right expressions concerning the matter of prayer, this remnant of Judah had dissembled in their hearts. Indeed, in Jeremiah 42:19-20 Jeremiah the prophet rebuked them for harboring the wrong calculation in their hearts – *"The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day. For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it."* They harbored the calculation that they might deceive and manipulate the Lord God with their right expressions in prayer. They harbored the calculation that they might deceive the Lord God into thinking that they were sincere in seeking His will and way for their lives. They harbored the calculation that they might manipulate the Lord God through their right expressions in prayer to unify His will unto their will. Yet the Lord God was

not deceived and was not manipulated. Rather, the Lord God was displeased with their dissembling.

### **Making the Wrong Choice**

Furthermore, this remnant of Judah disobeyed in their actions. Indeed, in Jeremiah 42:21 Jeremiah the prophet rebuked them for making the wrong choice in their actions – *“And now I have this day declared it to you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you.”* They made the choice to disobey the Word of the Lord that Jeremiah had delivered unto them. They made the choice not to do a single thing that the Lord had instructed through His prophet Jeremiah. They made the choice of rebellion, to disobey the Word, will, and way of the Lord God with a stubborn heart; and the Lord God was quite displeased with their disobedience.

### **Pursuing the Wrong Course**

Finally, this remnant of Judah disregarded the Lord’s warning. Indeed, in Jeremiah 42:22 Jeremiah the prophet rebuked them for pursuing the wrong course in the face of the Lord’s judgment – *“Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn.”* In Jeremiah 42:10 the Lord God had pronounced His grace upon this remnant of Judah, saying, *“If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.”* Yet they pursued the course of disregarding the Lord’s gracious forgiveness and gracious promise. In Jeremiah 42:11-12 the Lord God had pronounced His mercy upon this remnant of Judah, saying, *“Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.”* Yet they pursued the course of disregarding the Lord’s merciful deliverance and merciful restoration.

Yea, in Jeremiah 42:13-18 the Lord God presented His warning to this remnant of Judah, saying, *“But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God, saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more.”* Yet they pursued the course of completely disregarding the Lord’s warning of furious anger and fiery

judgment; and the Lord God's fiery displeasure was certainly kindled against them for their utter disregard of Him and His Word.

Yet what moved them to such dissembling, disobedience, and disregard? The answer is to be found in the closing phrase of Jeremiah 42:22 – "*In the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn.*" Yea, the answer is bound up in the two words "ye desire." Although they had made request to be shown the Lord's will, they had already determined and decided upon their own will. They had already determined and decided to pursue their own desire. They had not intention of submitting and unifying their desire unto the Lord's desire. Rather, they intended that through their prayers the Lord might be manipulated into submitting and unifying His desire to their desire. Indeed, dissembling in prayer will always occur when we are unwilling to deny our own desire. In addition, such dissembling in prayer will always stir up the furious anger of our Lord's displeasure against us.