

Situational Obedience!

Cornerstone Community Church – Pastor Jerry Ernst

July 14, 2024

Scripture: Jeremiah 34

Nations and people can have “Situational Obedience” to God

- When trying to get on God’s good side – people cry out to God.
- When people see their situation improving - they can shift spiritually backwards.
- “False repentance” reveals true motives.

Situational Obedience (Jeremiah 34)

1) KING ZEDEKIAH’S WARNING (Judah’s King): (Vv. 1-7)

Jeremiah’s Prophecy from God: (Vv. 1-3) “(2) *‘This is what the Lord says: ‘I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar), and he will burn it down. (3) You will not escape from his grasp but will surely be captured and handed over to him. You will see the king of Babylon with your own eyes, and he will speak with you face to face. And you will go to Babylon.’”*

- God tells King Zedekiah (King of Judah 597-586 B.C.), Jerusalem will be destroyed and handed over to Babylon (King Nebuchadnezzar).

Jeremiah’s Promise from God: (Vv. 4-7) “(4) *...This is what the Lord says concerning you: You will not die by the sword; (5) You will die peacefully...”*

2) KING ZEDEKIAH’S PRETEND REPENTANCE (Vv. 8-10) “(8) *The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to **proclaim freedom for the slaves**. (9) Everyone was to free their Hebrew slaves, both male and female; no one was to hold a fellow Hebrew in bondage. (10) So all the officials and people who entered into this covenant agreed that they would free their male and female slaves and no longer hold them in bondage. They agreed, and set them free.”*

The Pact: Zedekiah makes a covenant with the people in Jerusalem to free all fellow Hebrew slaves. *A first step of trying to get on God’s good side.

The Appeasement: The Jews were not to enslave their own people. Every seven years the servants/slaves were to be set free. God’s people had all-along been disobedient to God’s Law (*Exodus 21:2-11; Lev. 25:39-55; Deut. 15:12-18).

- Zedekiah *thought he could win* God’s favor by this obedient act.

3) KING ZEDEKIAH’S & JUDAH’S HYPOCRACY: (Vv. 11-16) “(11) But **afterward** they **changed their minds** and took back the slaves they had freed and enslaved them again.”

“they changed their minds” - (Heb. shub): “to turn back, return.”

What happened with Judah? The Egyptian army reinforced Judah’s army to fight against the Babylonians in 588 B.C. *Jeremiah 37:4-10

- The Babylonian takeover was temporarily halted – and so was Israel’s fear of them.

False Repentance from Judah: (Vv. 15-16) *“(15) Recently **you repented** and did what is right in my sight: Each of you proclaimed freedom to his countrymen. You even made a covenant before me in the house that bears my Name. (16) But now you have **turned around** and profaned my name; each of you has taken back the male and female slaves you had set free to go where they wished. **You have forced them to become your slaves again.**”*

4) KING ZEDEKIAH’S & JUDAH’S PUNISHMENT: (Vv. 17-22) *“(17) Therefore this is what the Lord says: You have not obeyed me; you have **not** proclaimed freedom to your own people. So I now proclaim ‘freedom’ for you, declares the Lord – ‘freedom’ to fall by the sword, plague and famine...(18) Those who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like a calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces...(20) I will deliver into the hands of their enemies who want to kill them (Babylon)...”*

- Judah was punished by war, famine, and disease (586 B.C.).
- **Background:** Jeremiah 37:5-10

Violation of a public Covenant: (Jer. 34:18-19)

***Genesis 15:8-10, 17** - If they violated their public oath, they would receive their own judgment! A self-inflicted curse and lie before God.

Two-halves: Symbolized by cutting an animal in two-halves and walking between them as a covenant before God.

LESSONS ABOUT “SITUATIONAL OBEDIENCE”

- 1) Don’t be spiritually *fickle* when you’re in a pickle.
- 2) Promises to God are *serious* promises (Jeremiah 34:8-9).
- 3) Repenting *isn’t* a game.

America is like Judah...

- “O God, O God,” in times of trouble; “No God - No God,” in secure times.
- We “obey” God in our time of need.
- When our situation improves, we return to our “old selves.”

Psalm 33:8-21 – *“(12) Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance.”*