

# LESSON 233

## FAITHFUL TESTIMONY

Related Scripture: Jeremiah 20:1-12

**KEY VERSE:** "And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."—Jeremiah 1:19.

Lesson Scripture: Jeremiah 38:2-13

### Introduction:

God's people generally, and ministers of His word particularly, are called to be faithful witnesses to a hostile world. We must speak the truth of God, even and especially when people do not wish to hear it.

Biblical truths concerning the sinfulness of man and the judgments and mercies of God have never been popular with the world. Preachers like to imagine, however, that at least the people of God will always welcome and believe the truth. Ideally, of course, and eventually, "He that is of God heareth God's words." (Jn. 8:47.) But not all who claim to be of God really are of God; and even His genuine children in this world still have their fleshly nature, and in the flesh they still resist spiritual truth.

Mark it down, therefore, that, other things being equal, the more popular a preacher is in this world, the less faithful he is to God and to His word. Of course, "other things" seldom are equal, and there is no virtue in seeking to be unpopular. Let us try to be as kind and loving, as tactful and sympathetic, as we possibly can be; let us remember that our primary mission is to win souls, not to drive them away. Even so, if we are faithful to our Lord, we need not fear popularity; the sinful nature of mortal flesh will see to that. (II Tim. 3:12.)

Jeremiah's prophecies of divine judgment upon the chosen people were typically distasteful to the people directly concerned. The passage included in this week's lesson (Jer. 38:2-13) may be outlined as follows:

1. Warning Words, vv. 2, 3
2. Political Princes, 4
3. Rueful Royalty, 5
4. Deadly Dungeon, 6
5. Sympathetic Servant, 7-9
6. Kingly Kindness, 10
7. Persistent Persecution, 11-13

### Notes on the Printed Text:

Warning Words, Jeremiah 38:2, 3.

During this age of grace, or "day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2), men may escape the coming judgments of God by repentance. (Jer. 18:6-8.) Again and again, through His faithful prophets, God had called His people to repentance. The time came when they were so hardened in sin that most of them would no longer repent; judgment upon the nation became inevitable.

As always when the crowd will not listen, God appealed to individuals. Though the city of Jerusalem must fall, individual residents who believed the warning words of the prophet could save their lives by going "forth to the Chaldeans."

### Political Princes, Jeremiah 38:4.

"Princes" here were the political and military leaders or rulers, technically subordinate to the king. Having little or no regard for the word of God, they were concerned chiefly with maintaining their own position. They spoke of "the welfare of this people," but their words were purely political. As with politicians generally, the welfare of the country and the safety of its citizens were of little concern in comparison with political advantage.

If these political princes had been genuinely concerned for the welfare of their people, they would have set an example of repentance and submission to the word of God in humility and prayer for divine deliverance. Instead, with the hatefulness characteristic of hardened sinners, they sought to kill the messenger of God.

### Rueful Royalty, Jeremiah 38:5.

One of the sad spectacles in human government is a figurehead king who lacks the power or will to rule. Such a king was Zedekiah: he could play at being king, and enjoy many of the honors and pleasures of royalty; but he could not oppose the will of the "princes."

### Deadly Dungeon, Jeremiah 38:6.

Whatever the intentions of men, God overrules in all things. No great harm can come to us who are His servants: death itself can be the gateway to eternal joy, but our enemies cannot kill us until God is ready to take us home. There was still work for Jeremiah to do as a prophet of God, and so God did not permit him to stay too long in the deadly dungeon.

### Sympathetic Servant, Jeremiah 38:7-9.

Help can come to us by the most unexpected means when God is on our side. The nation's leaders had demanded that Jeremiah be put to death, and the king had submitted to their demand; who would have supposed that a lowly Negro slave was to become the instrument that God would use to deliver His faithful prophet?

Ebed-melech showed his faith and courage by appealing publicly to the king "sitting in the gate," the customary place of judgment. He dared to accuse "these men" (the princes) of doing evil when they cast Jeremiah into the dungeon, and expressed his fear that the prophet would be left there to starve to death.

### Kingly Kindness, Jeremiah 38:10.

Perhaps the king was a little ashamed of his part in the affair, but at any rate he picked up a little courage and countermanded the order of the princes to the extent of sending men to get Jeremiah out of the dungeon. It was a small act of kingly kindness by a king who feared for his own safety. Read the rest of this chapter and vv. 1-8 of the next chapter to learn more about this king.

**Persistent Persecution, Jeremiah 38:  
11-13.**

Ebed-melech did the best he could for Jeremiah's safety and comfort. The old cloths and rags protected the emaciated body (no doubt reduced to skin and bones by near starvation) from being cut or bruised by the cords. But the prophet was still a prisoner. Zedekiah feared the princes too much to set him free. His life was spared, but persecution persisted.

**Key Verse:**

**"And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."—Jeremiah 1:19.**

We need have no fear, however strong and numerous our enemies, when God is with us. There is no lasting defeat for the true child of God. Often He gives deliverance that is manifest in this world, but our ultimate victory will be experienced in our resurrection from the dead. (I Cor. 15:25-27.) As our Savior was faithful to the point of shedding His blood for our redemption, so let us be faithful to Him and to His word. We cannot lose in the end, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (I Jn. 5:4.)