

It Takes Courage

by: Allen Dvorak

James described the faithless man who prays for wisdom as a 'double-minded man' (James 1:5-8). He is caught between his desire for wisdom and his unbelief and tossed back and forth. He prays to God, but doesn't believe that God will really answer! There is a certain sadness in his situation; he is not ultimately hindered by others, but by his own lack of conviction in the faithfulness and power of God.

Zedekiah was just such a man. The last of the kings of Judah, he reigned during a period of national unfaithfulness. God spoke to the rebellious nation through the prophet Jeremiah who encouraged Judah to return to faithfulness to the covenant. Zedekiah evidently had substantial contact with Jeremiah and was well aware of Jeremiah's message.

It is granted that Zedekiah was in a difficult position. On the one side were the Babylonians, the military power in that area of the world. On the other side were Judean nationalists who were against submission to the Babylonians. Zedekiah tried to take a position in the middle. He wouldn't listen to Jeremiah's message counseling submission to Babylon (Jeremiah 37:1-2), but he asked Jeremiah to pray to the Lord on behalf of the rebellious nation (37:3)!

Zedekiah called for Jeremiah to meet with him on several occasions, sometimes secretly (Jeremiah 21:1-10; 37:3-10, 17-21, 38:14-27). When the Babylonians were besieging the city of Jerusalem, Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah to hear the latest from the Lord. The message wasn't pleasant. Jeremiah told Zedekiah that he couldn't win against the Babylonians; Jerusalem would be captured! The only way for the Israelites to preserve their lives was to surrender to the Babylonians.

Zedekiah, however, was a 'double-minded' man. At the same time that he seemed to be interested in talking with God's prophet, he didn't want to heed the Lord's message. He had some respect for Jeremiah's role as prophet, but he was too weak to do the Lord's will. He was afraid of the princes of the land, allowing them to throw Jeremiah into prison and later into a dungeon (water cistern) where he sunk into the mire at the bottom (37:15-38:6).

It often takes great courage for spouses, parents, young people, etc. to make the hard decision and do the right thing. Zedekiah may have ostensibly been in a position of power, but he was actually a weakling. He lacked the strength of character to make the right decision, to face the opposition of wicked people. The current governor of Minnesota publicly announced that religion is just a crutch for the weak, but it frequently takes less strength and courage to do wrong than to do right and face the disapproval, ridicule or even persecution of wicked people who want everyone to live the way that they do.

The end of Zedekiah's story? When Jerusalem was finally captured, Zedekiah fled. He was caught, however, and saw the execution of his sons before the king of Babylon put out his eyes. What a sad story!

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To see what is right and not do it is want of courage or of principle.
Confucius, 551-479 B.C.

News & Notes

CARE & SHARE BEARS: Each Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. Join the ladies to help make bears for children.

SURGERY SCHEDULED: Michelle Hanlon's foot surgery is scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 4th.

PANTRY: Soup & crackers. Also, it's turkey time! Bring a frozen turkey to help those in need this Thanksgiving season.

REMEMBER IN PRAYERS: Bobby Sheville, Bob & Scharlotte Cyphers ; Shirley Thomas (Harry Nice's sister & Karen Strum's aunt), Richard Clutter (Eva Steff's brother), Crystal Baker (Connie Cowdery's daughter).

REMEMBER THESE SHUT-INS: Blondenia Orr, Virginia Rickerd.

OTHERS WITH PHYSICAL PROBLEMS: Weirton Medical Center: Mary Jane Bowers. Mercy Hospital, Pittsburgh: Bobby Sheville. At Home: Joey Hopwood, Geraldine Barrett, Fred & Ilene Rayl, Bertha Seman, Pauline Clutter, Dan Williams. **Don't forget to encourage others confined to their homes and in nursing homes. They are listed on the bulletin board.**

ALL OF SELF, NONE OF THEE

John Maxwell has identified four levels of maturity for Christians. They are given in progressive order with the least mature viewpoint listed first:

1. I'm going to do what I want, regardless of any thought for God.
2. If God gives me what I want, then I will give Him what He wants.
3. I will give God what He wants, with faith that He will give me what I want.
4. I will give God what He wants, regardless of any thought for myself.

Many Christians spend the balance of their life at level two or three, but the greatest joy is found in level four.

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." - Matthew 16:24.

Glad Tidings of Good Things - Jacksonville, AL

Christian Growth:

*"All of self and none of Thee ...
Some of self and some of Thee ...
Less of self and more of Thee ...
None of self and all of Thee."*

- From the hymn -