

FOR THESE THINGS I WEEP

Lamentations 1:16 (NRSV) ^{1,6} For these things I weep;
my eyes flow with tears;
for a comforter is far from me,
one to revive my courage;
my children are desolate,
for the enemy has prevailed.

Jeremiah is the book I read again and again. The word jeremiad has come into the English usage to mean lamenting or weeping. Yet this prophet had a great courage. His courage stemmed from the strong assurance, that God has chosen him(1,5) and that He would do what He has said.

He was one of the doom prophets. He had one message and the message never changed. He had a tough message to give. He had to declare that Jerusalem will be burnt, a message which no one believed. Every one in the city thought destruction would never come there, because Jerusalem is the city of the Great King. Isn't it the city where God loves to dwell?

It sounded incredible that Jerusalem would be burnt, and so the people did not believe Jeremiah at all. Yet Jeremiah spoke the word again and again.

The highlight of the book of Jeremiah is chapters 29-33. Glorious promises of return and restoration are spoken through Jeremiah. But soon after these, Jeremiah is persecuted because of the message that Jerusalem will be burnt by the Babylonians.

When these words written in a scroll were read by King Jehoiakim , he put them to flames scorning the message and the messenger. He sends people to arrest Jeremiah and his script writer, Baruch. But God hid them.(36,26).

And once again Jeremiah wrote the very same message and added some more. His whole message was this : Surrender to the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and live.

But no one was willing to believe this. They could not even think how God could vacate His dwelling place and allow a gentile to capture Jerusalem. Any other part of Israel would have been okay, but not Jerusalem.

After Jehoiakim, Zedekiah became king and he was very afraid, but he called Jeremiah and asked God's word. Yet Jeremiah did not change the message. It was the same. Surrender to the Babylonian king. But when the army came in Zedekiah

wanted to escape by fleeing, but was captured by the Babylonian army who plucked out his eyes and took him prisoner to Babylon.

Why is it so difficult to obey the word of God? Though Jeremiah was hated so much, right from the King called on him to enquire the word of the Lord. Yet strangely they chose not to listen to his words.

When I read this morning, I was really wondering how obstinate we can be. We know that this word of warning is surely from God. We want to know what God wants to say. But when He tells us so clearly that He is not in what we plan, we still go ahead and get scorched.

Why is it so hard to be obedient to the word of God? That is why Jeremiah wept. He wept bitter tears because they perished after they were warned again and again. Before Jerusalem was burnt, Jeremiah was beaten, tossed into a well, starved, yet he kept on speaking, kept on warning. But they never listened.

He weeps not because he was beaten, but because they are destroyed before his very eyes, despite all the warning. That is why he sings Lamentations.

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This is so true in our lives also we tend to shut our eyes to the warning of the real prophet, yet choose to believe the prophet who says the very thing we want to hear.

What will happen when the word of the Lord comes true in our life? Let us learn to discern. Know the real voice of God. To know the voice of God, let us read His word.