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“Courage for the Discouraged”

Jeremiah 45

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Discouragement comes in many forms. Heartache is no respecter of persons. In the book of Jeremiah, a man by the name of Baruch experienced his share of discouragement and he described it with words like sorrow, pain, being worn out, groaning, and without rest. Would these words describe the way you feel? Have you ever felt so discouraged that it was palpable and painful? Have you ever been so worn out with grief and sorrow, so exhausted with discouragement, that you couldn't sleep? Have you ever cried so much that you had no more tears? In this teaching, Pastor Gary brings a message of encouragement for those who are in a season of discouragement.

### Historical Background

#### 1. Baruch

- a. Jeremiah dictated prophecies from the Lord to Baruch, who was Jeremiah's personal secretary.
- b. His name in Hebrew means “blessed.”
- c. He was a son of Neriah, of the tribe of Judah.
- d. His name appears 25 times in this book.
- e. **Jeremiah 45** provides the details about a direct word of the Lord to Baruch.
- f. This chapter fits chronologically after **Jeremiah 36**, which was the “*fourth year*” of Jehoiakim's reign (607BC).
  - i. **Jeremiah 45:1** – “*This is what Jeremiah the prophet told Baruch son of Neriah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah King of Judah...*”
  - ii. **Jeremiah 36:1** – “*In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah...*”

2. **Jeremiah 36:1-4** – “*In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ‘Take a scroll and write on it all the words*

*I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, each of them will turn from his wicked way; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.’ ”*

3. Pastor Gary said: “Now, I want you to put yourself, for the moment, in Baruch’s shoes. [He] was hearing [about] the devastation that was coming, [and] the destruction that was coming. ... When you [hear] about all that was about to happen to your country and your countrymen, it’s bound to affect you deeply. And so, no doubt, part of chapter 45 is showing us [that] after [Baruch] had written all of the things that had been dictated to him that Baruch just became heavy-hearted. He [became] discouraged. He [knew] that God was going to be faithful to what he [said], and if God [ended] up doing what he [said]... there would be devastation upon the whole land. And, even if you were righteous in that day, like no doubt Baruch and Jeremiah were, Baruch still [knew] he was going to be affected by [the] devastation. ... I want you to try to imagine what life would be like if you were on the receiving end of prophecies... [that you were] hearing about your community being destroyed, [that] your church [was] going to be destroyed, your own family [was] going to be separated from you, [and] this was all coming to your country and your community and to your family! How would you feel about some foreign army was [getting ready] to invade you and your life [would] never be the same? ... All of the normal, everyday stuff that you commonly do [would] be totally changed. ... You would be heavy-hearted too!”
4. We don’t know if Baruch had been praying to God or if he had been sharing his feelings with Jeremiah, but God heard.
  - a. **Jeremiah 45:3** - *“You said, ‘Woe to me! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am worn out with groaning and find no rest.’ ”*
  - b. David experienced pain and sorrow in different seasons of life.
    - i. **Psalms 6:6** - *“I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.”*
    - ii. **Psalms 31:9-10** - *“Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.”*
    - iii. **Psalms 69:3** - *“I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God.”*
5. Pastor Gary shared an overview of the tragic deaths of Horatio and Anna Spafford’s four daughters on November 21, 1873 and their four-year-old son on February 11,

1880.<sup>1 2</sup>

- a. Spafford described his sorrow in the hymn, *It Is Well With My Soul*.<sup>3</sup>
    - i. "... when sorrows like sea billows roll..."
  - b. Spafford also described the ministry of the Lord and the peace that only the Lord can bring in times of intense grief and pain.
    - i. "When peace like a river..."
6. Pastor Gary also shared the tragic story of Philip Bliss, who wrote the music for Spafford's composition in 1876, and in that same year, on December 29<sup>th</sup>, Bliss and his wife, Lucy, died in a train crash near Ashtabula, Ohio.<sup>4</sup>
7. Christians are not immune to seasons of discouragement and depression.
  - a. Martin Luther endured many seasons of discouragement in his life, and he used words like melancholy, heaviness, depression, dejection of spirit, downcast, sad, and downhearted.
  - b. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a great preacher from the late 1800s, experienced depression starting at the age of 24.
    - i. "My spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for."<sup>5</sup>
    - ii. "Causeless depression is not to be reasoned with, nor can David's harp charm it away by sweet discoursings. As well fight with the mist as with this shapeless, undefinable, yet all-beclouding hopelessness."<sup>6</sup>

### God Cares About Us In Our Discouragement

8. Pastor Gary said: "At this moment, God was speaking to the whole nation of Judah, through the prophet Jeremiah, because of their rebellion and their sin and their disobedience to God. [So, God was] using Jeremiah to speak to an entire nation, and in this moment, God put on pause a message for the nation, so that he might deliver a message for one person. ... God cares about every single thing that you and I face, and even though he's the God of the universe, he is never distracted by the masses to be unconcerned for the one - for you! God cares! ... The Lord may not always deal that personally with us [the way he did with Baruch]... [but] the main takeaway... is that God knows and God hears and God cares about us.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.spaffordcenter.org/history>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/americancolony/amcolony-family.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/It\\_Is\\_Well\\_with\\_My\\_Soul/](https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/It_Is_Well_with_My_Soul/)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biobliss5.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/do-you-see-the-glory-of-god-in-the-sun-spurgeons-battle-against-depression/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://books.google.com/books?id=juzC-7WGEmkC&pg=PA194&pg=PA194&dq=spurgeon+this+shapeless+yet+definable&source=bl&ots=bWFIYgmwvz&sig=ACfU3U2IAGMz5QeNFtaooLICPyYFIS2NtA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewimhvyF-gAhWi5IMKHU8jCPkQ6AEwAXoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=spurgeon%20this%20shapeless%20yet%20definable&f=false>

- a. **Proverbs 25:11** - *“A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”*
- b. **Psalms 55:17** - *“Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.”*
- c. **Psalms 72:12** - *“For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.”*

### God Should Not Be Blamed For Our Discouragement

9. In **Jeremiah 45:3**, we read that Baruch accused God of adding sorrow to his pain.
10. Pastor Gary shared an overview of **Jeremiah 36**, including the fact that Baruch was the one who took the scroll of the prophecies the Lord gave to Jeremiah to King Jehoiakim, and how the king shredded the scroll and ordered that the fragments be thrown into a fire! And if that wasn't enough to deal with, Jehoiakim ordered that Baruch and Jeremiah be arrested, but thankfully, the Lord hid them and protected them from harm.
  - a. **Jeremiah 36:20-26** - *“After they put the scroll in the room of Elishama the secretary, they went to the king in the courtyard and reported everything to him. The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and Jehudi brought it from the room of Elishama the secretary and read it to the king and all the officials standing beside him. It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment, with a fire burning in the firepot in front of him. Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire. The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes. Even though Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them. Instead, the king commanded Jerahmeel, a son of the king, Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet. But the LORD had hidden them.”*
11. Baruch was just trying to serve the Lord and honor the Lord by doing what he was told to do by Jeremiah, and people were on the way to arrest and kill him!
12. Pastor Gary said: “Here's how we can sound, in a similar way as Christians. We can end up from time to time looking at our lives through the lens of our discouragement and looking at God through the lens of our discouragement, and we are basically saying something like this: ‘All I've tried to do, Lord, is to live for you. I've just tried to be faithful. I go to church and I try to raise my kids in the ways of the Lord, and I want to honor you. Sure, nobody's perfect, but I've tried to be a good Christian, and ever since I've been a Christian this has happened and that has

happened and the other thing has happened, and I'm not really convinced that you care!' ... Listen, if you think God is the source of your pain, who are you going to turn to as the source for your help? ... [Jesus] didn't die on a cross with the intention to improve your life or my life, for earth; he died on the cross to prepare our lives for heaven. [The Lord] knows that this earth is wicked and corrupt and deceitful and has its share of discouragement and despair and crises and disease and death. If the world had none of those things, then why would we need to be rescued from it? ... He came to transform our lives, change our hearts, and take us to heaven when we die."

- a. **Psalm 46:1-3** - *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging."*
- b. **Galatians 1:4** - *"[Jesus Christ] gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age..."*
- c. **Revelation 21:4** - *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

13. Pastor Gary said: "I am convinced that God has spared us from a lot of stuff that we don't even know [about]. ... [When] we get to heaven we are going to realize that God spared us of a multitude of things! And so, we need to thank him and praise him in spite of the fact that we don't even know what those things might necessarily be. But the fact that we do, sometimes, experience pain and discouragement in this lifetime is a reminder that that's why Christ died on the cross. [He died] to rescue us from our own sins and from a sinful, fallen world."

- a. **Romans 8:18** - *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."*

#### God Should Be Exalted Through Our Discouragement

14. **Jeremiah 45:4-5** - *"The LORD said, 'Say this to him: This is what the LORD says: I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted throughout the land. Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. For I will bring disaster on all people, declares the LORD, but where you go I will let you escape with your life.' "*

15. Daniel was a prophet in Babylon while Jeremiah was a prophet in Judah.

- a. Daniel was sent to Babylon in 606BC, where he would spend the rest of his life.
- b. Daniel served King Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son, and Belshazzar, his grandson.

- c. Daniel gave a similar message to the one that Jeremiah gave, that God was going to overthrow the Babylonians because they were too harsh on the Jews when the Lord used the Babylonians as his “rod of discipline.”
- d. [Daniel 2:21a](#) - “[God] changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.”
- e. [Daniel 4:17](#) - “... the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.”
- f. Pastor Gary said: “God was basically saying [to Baruch], ‘Since I’m sovereign over the nations and your life, who should you seek great things for, you or me?’ ... ‘You should live to exalt my name.’
- g. [Daniel 5:22-23](#) - “... *Belshazzar, have you not humbled yourself... you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. ... you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.*”

16. Pastor Gary said: “Your life and your ways are held in the palm of God’s hand. There are plenty of people in our world who live to make a name for themselves. They thrive [for fame and] they are drunk on notoriety and fame. They promote themselves; they brand themselves, [and] they market themselves. All for what? For a world that will forget about them five minutes after the next self-promoting person steps forward. As Christians, though, friends, we have to have a different mindset. ... If God promotes you [or] makes you successful [or] God gives you a platform, use it [and] don’t abuse it, because the same God that gave that to you can take it all away in a minute! He wants us to exalt his name. He wants us to lift up his name. He wants us to glorify his name, even in our discouragement. ... It’s important that we worship our way through discouragement [and that we honor God no matter what our circumstance].”

17. [Psalm 42:11](#) - “*Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*”

#### Discussion Questions

1. Read [Jeremiah 45](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times in their life when discouragement was overwhelming and debilitating. (See #4 above)
3. Read the short bio Pastor Gary gave about Baruch. (See #1 above)
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about the way Baruch felt and reacted to Jeremiah’s prophesy from the Lord. (See #2 and #3 above)

5. Spend time reading and talking about the seasons of discouragement, pain, and sorrow in David's life. (See #4 above)
6. Spend time talking about the fact that Christians aren't immune to seasons of discouragement and depression and allow the people in your group to share their experiences about the ways the Holy Spirit ministered to them. (See #5 through #7 above)
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments and [Psalm 55:17](#) and [Psalm 72:12](#), regarding the biblical truth that God cares about us in our discouragement. (See #8 above)
8. Read and discuss [Jeremiah 36:20-26](#). (See #10 above)
9. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks concerning the ways we react to troubling circumstances and times. (See #11 and #12 above)
10. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they've blamed the Lord for their pain, sorrow, suffering, grief, etc.
11. Read and discuss [Psalm 46:1-3](#), [Galatians 1:4](#), and [Revelation 21:4](#).
12. Read and discuss [Jeremiah 45:4-5](#).
13. Are you, like Pastor Gary, convinced that the Lord has spared you from a great number of things that you aren't aware of? (See #13 and #14 above)
14. Spend time talking about the similarities between the prophecies the Lord gave to Jeremiah and Daniel. (See #15 above)
15. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about the Lord's keeping love and his desire that we live for him and lift his name up in every season of life. (See #16 above)
16. Read [Psalm 42:11](#) and close your meeting in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)