

Unit II: Jeremiah and the Promise of Renewal

Well . . . That's a Deep Subject!

DEVOTIONAL READING: Romans 13:1-10

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Jeremiah 20:1-6; 37:1-38:28; 43:1-7

PRINT PASSAGE: Jeremiah 38:7-13

KEY VERSE

The king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.

(Jeremiah 38:10, KJV)

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The king commanded Ebed-Melek the Cushite, “Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies.” (Jeremiah 38:10, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Assess Jeremiah’s “treason” and suffering at the hands of his people.
- Have courage in the face of hardship.
- Advocate for those who are unable to advocate for themselves.

*Key Terms

Cast (verse 9)—Hebrew: *shalak* (shaw-lak): threw, hurled, flung; “thrown” (NIV).

Dungeon (verse 7)—Hebrew: *bōwr* (bore): a pit (with no water in it); “cistern” (NIV); well.

Hunger (verse 9)—Hebrew: *raab* (raw-awb'): famine; to be hungry; “will starve” (NIV).

Lifted (verse 13)—Hebrew: *alab* (aw-law'): went up; ascended; climbed; brought up; “took . . . up” (KJV).

Prophet (verse 10)—Hebrew: *nabi* (naw-bee'): a spokesman, speaker; inspired man.

Spake (verse 8)—Hebrew: *dabar* (daw-bar'): spoke; declared; conversed; “said” (NIV).

Treasury (verse 11)—Hebrew: *otsar* (o-tsaw'): treasure; storehouse; a depository.

***(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**



Introduction

The story of Ebedmelech's courageous intervention to save Jeremiah resonates deeply with the African American experience of advocating for justice in the face of institutional resistance. Like many African Americans who have navigated predominantly white institutions while maintaining their moral compass and community responsibilities, Ebedmelech—an Ethiopian in the Judean court—used his position of access to speak truth to power. His story mirrors the experiences of countless African American professionals, church leaders, and community advocates who have had to carefully balance their institutional roles with their calling to stand up for what is right.

Just as Ebedmelech approached King Zedekiah with both moral conviction and practical solutions, many African American adults have learned to combine passionate advocacy with strategic action in their professional and community lives. The detailed care that Ebedmelech took in using ropes padded with old cloths to lift Jeremiah reflects the thoughtful, methodical approach required when working for change within established systems.

This passage speaks to those who have faced the choice between comfortable silence and risky advocacy. It affirms the African American tradition of using

whatever position or influence one has—whether in corporate boardrooms, government offices, or community organizations—to lift up those who have been cast down, just as Ebedmelech lifted Jeremiah from the cistern.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Courage of Compassion (*Jeremiah 38:7-9*)

KJV

7 Now when Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

8 Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king saying,
9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city.

NIV

7 But Ebed-Melek, a Cushite, an official in the royal palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. While the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate,

8 Ebed-Melek went out of the palace and said to him,

9 "My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into a cistern, where he will starve to death when there is no longer any bread in the city."

The text introduces Ebedmelech, an Ethiopian eunuch in the king's palace (verse 7). This detail is significant as it highlights his status as both a foreigner and a court official, emphasizing the unexpected nature of God's chosen deliverer. While the king sat at the Benjamin Gate, Ebedmelech learned of Jeremiah's plight, placing this event in the context of official court business and public administration. In verse 8, Ebedmelech demonstrated exceptional bravery by leaving the palace to speak directly to the king. His courageous act challenged the decisions of powerful officials who had persuaded the king to imprison Jeremiah, making his intervention all the more remarkable. In verse 9, Ebedmelech presented three pivotal arguments to the king. He revealed the immorality of the officials' actions, underscored the life-threatening situation that Jeremiah faced, and stressed the urgency of the matter by highlighting the imminent danger of death by starvation. His reference to the lack of bread in the city serves as a stark reminder of the dire conditions during the siege.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does Ebedmelech's strategic approach to advocacy inform efforts to speak up for justice? What lessons are there in his wise, courageous strategy for approaching authority?

Divine Providence in Human Action (Jeremiah 38:10-11)

KJV

10 Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.
11 So Ebedmelech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

NIV

10 Then the king commanded Ebed-Melek the Cushite, “Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies.”

11 So Ebed-Melek took the men with him and went to a room under the treasury in the palace. He took some old rags and worn-out clothes from there and let them down with ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern.

King Zedekiah embodied both urgency and compassion when he commanded Ebedmelech to gather thirty men to rescue Jeremiah from the depths of the cistern (verse 10). This choice emphasizes the significance of the mission and the strength required to confront any potential resistance from those who had imprisoned Jeremiah. It is a powerful reminder that God can work through established authority to fulfill His divine purpose even in life's most challenging and dire moments. In the events of verse 11, Ebedmelech showcased remarkable practicality and wisdom as he executed the rescue. His decision to access the palace wardrobe beneath the treasury demonstrated his resourcefulness and genuine concern for Jeremiah's well-being. By gathering old rags and worn-out clothing, Ebedmelech exemplifies that genuine compassion is expressed through thoughtful, deliberate action. This focus on the details illustrates that real kindness is not solely rooted in good intentions; it also lies in our willingness to take meaningful actions for the benefit of others, ensuring that our compassion has a tangible impact on those in need.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does the detailed preparation for Jeremiah's rescue challenge our own approach to helping others? What does the rescue operation teach believers about the relationship between faith and practical action?

Faithful Witness in Crisis (*Jeremiah 38:12-13*)

KJV

12 And Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armpits under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

13 So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

NIV

12 Ebed-Melek the Cushite said to Jeremiah, “Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms to pad the ropes.” Jeremiah did so,

13 and they pulled him up with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

The author offers a powerful glimpse into the rescue operation, highlighting Ebedmelech's deep empathy as he told Jeremiah to put rags under his armpits to soften the ropes (verse 12). This thoughtful action reveals a deep sensitivity to the prophet's physical and emotional state in the cistern. True compassion shines through in attention to even the smallest details, preserving individuals' dignity and comfort in their time of need. Verse 13 brings the rescue narrative to a triumphant conclusion with Jeremiah's extraction from the cistern. However, the fact that the prophet remained in the court of the guard serves as a meaningful reminder that although he was saved from immediate danger, he still faced limitations. This highlights a powerful truth: God's deliverance gives strength and hope but does not always equate to total freedom from all constraints. Instead, it often signifies a preservation for His greater purposes.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this account of careful rescue speak to the way believers should seek to assist those in crisis? What lesson does this narrative teach about the nature of God's deliverance?

A Closing Thought

The detailed account of Jeremiah's rescue, aided by Ebedmelech's intervention, offers important lessons about God's faithfulness and personal courage and compassion. God often works through unexpected individuals and ordinary means to fulfill His purposes. This passage challenges believers to evaluate their willingness to stand up for truth and justice, even when it comes at a cost. It teaches that true compassion requires a combination of moral courage and practical wisdom. God seeks servants who are vigilant and ready to serve as instruments of His providence in others' lives.

Your Life

This passage emphasizes the necessity of moral courage and practical wisdom in service to others. Like Ebedmelech, Christians must recognize injustice, advocate for the vulnerable, and take concrete actions to assist those in need. The careful preparation and execution of the rescue show that effective compassion requires strategic thinking and attention to detail. In your daily lives, you will encounter opportunities to speak up for others and help the vulnerable. Open your eyes and pray to remain vigilant for opportunities to intervene on behalf of those suffering from injustice.

Your World!

This narrative provides a powerful framework for sharing faith through action and advocacy. The story illustrates universal themes of courage, compassion, and divine providence that resonate with people across cultural boundaries. When sharing your faith, you can use this account to discuss how God works through unlikely heroes and how moral courage often requires standing against the majority. The practical nature of Ebedmelech's compassion demonstrates

how authentic faith manifests in tangible actions, not just words. His example shows how combining bold advocacy with practical help can make believers' witness more effective and credible.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, give us the courage of Ebedmelech to stand for truth and justice, wisdom to demonstrate practical compassion, and faith to trust in Your providential care throughout life's challenges. Make us effective instruments of mercy in the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Please be prepared for next week's lesson. The lesson topic for Sunday, November 9, 2025, is "We've Fallen and We Can't Get Up!" The Devotional Reading is Lamentations 1:18-22, the Background Scriptures are 2 Kings 23:1-25:21, and the Print Passages are 2 Kings 24:18-20; 25:1-9.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, November 3	“The Master Is Coming Soon”	(Luke 12:42-48)
TUESDAY, November 4	“The Purifying Fire of Change”	(Luke 12:49-53)
WEDNESDAY, November 5	“The Lord’s Purifying Purpose”	(Lamentations 2:17-22)
THURSDAY, November 6	“Hope in the Lord”	(Lamentations 3:21-36)
FRIDAY, November 7	“Faith Tested by Fire”	(1 Peter 1:1-12)
SATURDAY, November 8	“Prepare for Action”	(1 Peter 1:13-25)
SUNDAY, November 9	“God’s Judgment Is Sure”	(2 Kings 24:18-20; 25:1-9)

NOTES