

Freedom in Truth

Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

Scripture: Acts 4:13-22

Song: “Not Ashamed”

Jailed often for preaching his beliefs on equality, justice, and peace, George Fox found himself face-to-face with Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell. This commoner’s refusal to bow to anyone but God flew against Britain’s religious, social, and government institutions. Despite considerable persecution, Fox discovered freedom and purpose in his dedication to proclaiming gospel truth. His persistent witness won Cromwell’s respect and set the foundation for the Quaker movement.

How could a few uneducated men like Fox, Peter, and John rattle powerful authorities simply by speaking truth? They merely lived their convictions and told people why. Yet that was enough to shake the very pillars of society.

The Holy Spirit empowers us too in countering corrupt authorities. If we live passionately for God, we make Him evident as our words and deeds manifest His glory. When pressured to be silent, we can live freely under God’s sovereignty, acting boldly and sharing the wonderful things He has done. In the end we will be accountable only to Him, and He will reward our faithfulness.

Father, thank You for the freedom in living boldly in Your truth. In Jesus’ name, amen.

May 10–16. **Megan L. Anderson** is a small-business entrepreneur and dog hostel proprietor. Between desk work and games of fetch, she enjoys teaching Sunday school, drinking Irish Breakfast tea, and cooking for friends.

Our Heavenly Advocate

Irijah would not listen to [Jeremiah]; instead, he arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials (Jeremiah 37:14).

Scripture: Jeremiah 37:11-16

Song: “Defender”

After shifts of my cashier job, I carefully counted the money, filled out a ledger, and submitted everything to management. One day a large sum went missing. I was presumed a thief. Though I'd been a faithful employee for years, my reputation and livelihood were at stake. I searched everywhere, asked coworkers for help, and rechecked records. Nothing. Long days of gut-sickening, sinking feelings crawled by. When would it end? How could I prove my innocence? Eventually it came to light that someone misplaced the money after I'd turned it in—and let me take the blame. My name was cleared, and I was promoted.

Though mine was not as dire a circumstance as Jeremiah's, I relate to his shock and uncertainty as Irijah accused and imprisoned him on false charges. But God defends His faithful against even the greatest injustices. Trials may seem never-ending, but God works all things for our good and His glory, advocating for us from His heavenly throne.

We are in the care of the one who is greater than all the powers of this world. When not distracted by vindicating ourselves or seeking revenge, we can fix our attention on God's character and His hand working within our troubles. Trusting God grants us power to turn trials into opportunities for growing stronger in faith. Our Father never leaves His children undefended.

Father, thank You for Your faithfulness amid trials. We place our trust in Your justice. In Jesus' name, amen.

Lighting the Darkness

“I will rescue you on that day, declares the LORD; you will not be given into the hands of those you fear” (Jeremiah 39:17).

Scripture: Jeremiah 38:7-13; 39:1-18

Song: “This Little Light of Mine”

Flickering candlelight of paper lanterns arranged in a cross (and bearing names of those touched by suicide and depression) gleams against the night. Each year neighbors surrounding our church gather with flashlights and walk around town, shining light into the darkness as beacons of hope for anyone feeling trapped in despair. Around the cross, testimonies of healing and support emerge from even the most heartbreaking losses. It is a powerful reminder of God’s steadfast faithfulness and our sacred calling as His messengers to carry Christ’s light into the bleakest places.

Were it not for Ebed-Melek’s vigilance and compassion (Jeremiah 38:7-13), Jeremiah may have starved in that shadowy pit. How must Jeremiah have felt after so long imprisoned alone? What hope must have been inspired by the torchlight piercing the darkness of his cell to reveal a troop come to liberate him! Jeremiah’s rescue wasn’t glamorous. Ebed-Melek had only old rags to offer. But God blessed his faithfulness and promised deliverance from the oncoming battle.

Likewise, God does not require that we be specially equipped to show up for others in their times of need. He only asks that we remain willing and open to His direction. If we live faithfully like Ebed-Melek, God can bless and use us as lanterns carrying the Holy Spirit’s light where it is needed most.

Father, fill us with Your light that we may illuminate this dark world with hope. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Preservation in Conflict

[King Zedekiah asked,] “Is there any word from the LORD?” “Yes,” Jeremiah replied, “you will be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon” (Jeremiah 37:17).

Scripture: Jeremiah 37:17-21

Song: “O Faithful Lord”

As the country teetered on the brink of civil war, President Abraham Lincoln said, “I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me . . . with God’s help I shall not fail. I may not see the end; but it will come and I shall be vindicated.” Though sticking to his biblical convictions created enemies, Lincoln remained faithful and never gave in to fear of men. As a result, millions of slaves were granted emancipation.

Unlike President Lincoln, King Zedekiah feared mortal enemies more than the God of his salvation, though warned of the consequences. Buckling under pressure of corrupt counselors, Zedekiah condemned not only himself but also his people to slavery and exile. Even so, God worked mercy through him.

Despite Jeremiah’s prophetic wisdom going unheeded and unrewarded, God used Zedekiah’s and others’ wrongs to protect and care for Jeremiah. People may not accept the divine truth we offer either, but we have nothing to fear. God can use even the farthest-strayed heart to work for our good. If we trust and obey God, heeding His Word, He will preserve us through life’s conflicts.

Father, thank You for Your preserving hand in times of trial. May we speak Your truth boldly. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Obeying Wisely

[The officials] said no more to [Jeremiah], for no one had heard his conversation with the king (Jeremiah 38:27).

Scripture: Jeremiah 38:24-28

Song: “Our God”

Levi Coffin’s home became known as the Underground Railroad’s “Grand Central Station,” as he and his wife illegally helped slaves escape captivity. Yet Coffin was never arrested or tried. How? He used his words and influence as a businessman wisely. When confronted by slave catchers, Coffin never denied his abolitionist activities, but never revealed incriminating information either. Though it put him at risk with men, Coffin maintained that while acting on God’s Word, it is always safe to do right.

Similarly, Jeremiah fully trusted God and told the truth when questioned, but proved shrewd enough to conceal the true purpose of his meeting with the king. He wisely used his resources—palace connections, words, and experience—and as a result stayed safe until the city’s fall.

Sometimes it isn’t enough to just obey God’s calling; we must also be wise in how we go about it. As Jesus said, “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). Those who hold power through evil deeds would destroy those who work for righteousness. If we speak and act carefully with God’s truth, we can accomplish the most good. When we trust God’s protection through hardship, as we faithfully work His will, He is faithful to sustain us.

Father, guide and protect us as we carefully declare Your truth to the world. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Consequences

Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. So . . . Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon . . . encamped outside [Jerusalem] and built siege works all around it (2 Kings 24:20–25:1).

Scripture: 2 Kings 24:20–25:12

Song: “Dear Lord and Father of Mankind”

Harry S. Truman had a difficult decision to make. He could risk prolonging the war with Japan, or he could employ the atomic bomb in hopes of Japan’s swift surrender. Either way, lives hung in the balance. He chose the latter, likely saving countless people at the cost of devastating thousands. Emperor Hirohito announced Japan’s surrender six days after the second bomb.

President Truman acted in his nation’s best interest despite the dramatic consequences that would cement his name in history. Perhaps King Zedekiah feared that heeding Jeremiah’s counsel to surrender to Babylon (Jeremiah 27:12; 38:17) would mark him as a coward. But God made the consequences clear. By caving to his short-term fears instead of trusting God and following His instructions, Zedekiah exacted calamitous long-term consequences on himself and his people.

Decisions can be frightening. We worry about failing others, damaging our reputations, or making matters worse. But God’s counsel is dependable and wise. In the face of tough decisions, we can trust Him to be faithful to keep His promises and lead us safely through troubles. When we disregard His direction, though, He is also dutiful in disciplining us. No matter how shaky our circumstances, there is hope in God’s faithfulness; and we can rely on His Word.

Father, thank You that we can always turn to You for hope and guidance. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Choosing Forgiveness

“[The officers of the king of Babylon] will not hand you over,” Jeremiah replied. “Obey the LORD by doing what I tell you. Then it will go well with you, and your life will be spared” (Jeremiah 38:20).

Scripture: Jeremiah 38:14-23

Song: “Simply Trusting Every Day”

Eva Mozes Kor angered her Jewish community by forgiving Dr. Mengele and the Nazis who experimented on her at Auschwitz. Survivors and their families accused her of undermining the importance of the Holocaust and dishonoring those who were lost. Despite people’s berating and her own fears, Kor met with former Nazis and organized pilgrimages to the concentration camp, where she publicly forgave all those involved with her and her family’s experiences there.

Kor could have chosen the worldly wisdom of clinging to bitterness for a false sense of power. Instead she dedicated her life to teaching the true power of forgiveness—choosing the divine way, though certainly not the easy way. By doing so, Kor’s life was liberated from the oppression of anger and resentment. She was free to experience the joy of her own family as well as fulfillment in her work for the rest of her days.

In the face of life’s trials, we have the same choice as King Zedekiah and Eva Mozes Kor. We can plant our trust in God’s unfailing instruction, or we can willfully fall prey to this fallen world’s distorted wisdom and design our own ruin. We may not avoid disaster, but God will preserve us through it and reward our obedience with complete freedom in Him.

Father, strengthen us to choose Your higher way over our sinful inclinations. In Jesus’ name, amen.