

Jeremiah 42:1-7

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In Chapter 41 of Jeremiah we read of the fear the Israelites experienced in the face of opposing forces. Then, in 42:1-7, we learn that a leader named Johanan, together with all the people were considering fleeing to Egypt. Johanan approached Jeremiah the prophet, asking Jeremiah to pray to the Lord for them, *"that the Lord your God may show us the way in which we should walk and the thing we should do," (v.3)*

Jeremiah did seek God on their behalf and, ten days later, told them what God had said. (42:8-22) which was that:

- They should stay where they were;
- They were not to go down into Egypt;
- They were not to be afraid.

Through Jeremiah, God gave:

- Direction; Encouragement; and also
- Warning of the consequences of disobedience.

But, because it wasn't what they wanted to hear, they rejected Jeremiah's word accusing the prophet of speaking falsely. They decided to disregard the word and to go down to Egypt anyway!

The result of their disobedience was much suffering, the very thing they wanted to avoid. God had graciously warned that their problems would follow them and they did! Their lips had expressed a desire to know and obey God's will but their hearts had already made a choice to do what they thought best to do. The concern for self-preservation took priority over God's word to them.

How thankful we can be for the pitfalls God points out to us in His Word, for

our help and encouragement in keeping us on the pathway of His will.

In this story we see that God's wise instruction to us is that:

- We do not run because of fear;
- We do not base our decisions on our own assessment of circumstances, but give priority to God's word;
- We do choose obedience, not disobedience

As we think about their approach to Jeremiah, and their subsequent decision to run away from their situation, we see that they did not really want God's will, but just wanted God to approve theirs! We see that God, in His love and wisdom, will not put His approval on desires of unsound motivation. Obedience would have brought peace and blessing instead of the suffering they experienced.

Many of us may recognize that there have been times when we have been tempted to think that we know better than God as to what is right for us; and times when we have been tempted to run away from a situation. Here, in His Word, God gives wisdom for such times.

In Psalm 139:23 the desire expressed is: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

We may wish to pray:

Father, let not fear and self-preservation lead me into temptation; teach me to listen, to trust and be obedient to You. Make my life Christ-centred, not self-centred. I ask it in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen