

**Jeremiah 43: 1-13; “The Path of Pride or Faith”, Sermon # 50 in the series – “Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020.**

As we read the verses of Chapter 43, the question has probably come to your mind; are these the same people who in Chapter 42, verses 5 and 6 said – “Let the Lord be a true and faithful witness between us if we do not do according to everything which the Lord your God sends us by you?” “Whether it is pleasing or displeasing we will obey the voice of the Lord our God that it may be well with us?” I think that they must have believed that surely God and Jeremiah would approve of their plans to go to Egypt.” “To them it must have seemed the only sane and sensible thing to do. So many people had died, so many had been taken captive, and even Gedaliah was treacherously murdered; the man who had said – “Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon.” They believed that it was only by their own resourcefulness and cunning that they had been left alive. They were the only remaining mighty men; they were the forces in the fields (chapter 40: 13), and they believed that it was their ability to freely move around and to defend themselves which had kept them from death by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence.

But the sad and difficult lesson that never was learned by these people was that they should have looked beyond their outward circumstances of their lives to the will and purpose of God. A Christian must learn to walk by faith in God’s word and not by the sight of their own understanding. (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5: 7) That is where true safety, true strength, and real provision are found. These men who had asked Jeremiah to go to God to ask directions for them, had now shown their true colors. They are described for us in verse 2 as “all the proud men”. At this hour, then, I would like to show you where these two paths lead – the path of pride and the path of faith. My observations on faith will come to you as an alternative way to pride, which we are all given to in many ways. And I will show you the way of faith which will lead to your finding salvation, spiritual help and guidance, through our Lord Jesus Christ. There will be a far better outcome for each one of us if we will walk on the path of faith. Let me give you 4 reasons to have faith in God and to repent of pride.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Pride’s path is very dangerous because it contradicts God’s word to you and may lead you to contend with God’s servant.** (verses 1 and 2)

In verse 19, Jeremiah had delivered God’s word to the remnant of Judah not to go Egypt; that He had certainly admonished them that day. He told them that they were hypocrites in their hearts when they had sent him to pray to the Lord, and seek direction from him. Their minds had already been made up, but they had pretended that they weren’t. You see this in verse 2 where it says – ‘Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men spoke, saying to Jeremiah, ‘You speak falsely!’ “The Lord our God has not sent you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to dwell there.’” Their statement here shows us that pride will often lead to presumption. We presume that because our thoughts and our way are said to be wrong that we must fight to have our way anyway because we desire to be free to decide and to control our own destiny.

Unfortunately this is something that some Christians may fall into in their thinking. They would like God’s approval and the approval of godly men, but if they do not approve and actually go about to show them their error and their sin in what they desire, or how they are trying to obtain it is not good, then they turn on them and contradict God’s word to them. They presume that if someone’s godly counsel, if it contradicts their own desires and their own observations, then it must be false. Sometimes they will go further, and they will attack the authority of God’s servant, to even speak the word to them. These men said – “The Lord God has not sent you to say – Do not go down to Egypt.” So pride leads to presumption and to false

conclusions being drawn. A person may think that they know God's will, but have they really checked His word? If they do not, they will presume that they are right.

This can also lead to contention; arguing and fighting with God's servant. These men pretended submission to the word and will of God, but they would contend for their own will and way in this matter. But Proverbs 13: 10 says – "By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom." The King James version says – "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well-advised is wisdom." These men became angry because Jeremiah did not appear to have their best interests in mind." Proverbs 15: 18 says – "A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention." Ask yourself this question – What is it that I get angry about? Is it an issue of righteousness? But what is it that I insist upon strongly in my relationship with others close to me – my wife or husband; my father or mother, or perhaps someone who is in authority either at work or school or church? Do I say in my heart, or do I speak it out loud to them that they are false when they are only trying to tell me what God expects of me?

Will I contend with them to get my own way in the path of pride, or will I walk by faith in God, and receive His word? In Proverbs 17: 19 it says – "He who loves transgression, loves strife." "And he who exalts his gate seeks destruction." A gate is something that let us in and out of where we are going. The person who exalts their gate exalts their own wisdom and power in going through the various situations in this life. That was what these men were doing. They did not know, that in choosing to act independently of Jeremiah's word to them, a word which was from the Lord, that they were actually seeking their own destruction. Let us learn, my brethren to live by faith; to live by receiving the counsel of godly elders and wise and mature believers. For it just may be that the issues not only of temporal life and death will be at stake, but issues of eternal life and death may also be at stake. A person who has saving faith will learn to pray and to cry to God for wisdom about the most important things in their life. By faith they will learn to confess their pride, or sensuality, or selfish ambition, and their quarrelsomeness to God.

Listen to Psalm 32: 1-11 – "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long." "For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought (or the fever-heat) of summer." "Selah" "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden." "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." "Selah" For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him."

"You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance." "Selah" "I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with My eye." "Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you." "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him." Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, your righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" So the object in living your Christian life before God is to be upright in heart. And the way to uprightness in heart is to trust in the Lord. Yes, you may have committed a sin, or even a number of grievous sins, in your heart, and even in your actions, and yet when you acknowledge your sin, and your iniquity you will not hide, when you confess your transgressions to the Lord, God will forgive the iniquity of your sin.

God will become your hiding place, even as He did with David. David knew that God was going to preserve him from trouble. He knew that God would surround him with songs of deliverance. He knew all this by faith; trusting in God, that God would show him the path of life.

In God's light, the light of the Holy Spirit shining on His word, he would see light; he would see what he needed to do, and how he should proceed to come out from under the guilt of sin, and he would receive help from God on how to deal with all of his enemies. The path of faith, of trusting in God, would lead to God's instructing him on how he should live from that point forward, into his future restoration and back into many good things. God would instruct him and teach him in the way that he should go. He would guide him very practically into all the truth of what He wanted David to do; how He wanted David to think about himself in a humble and sincere way before Him. He exhorts David not to be stubborn, like a horse or mule, in relation to receiving this practical instruction from His word. If he was stubborn and would not receive instruction, but had to be dragged into doing the right thing, it would only cause people around him, who he needed to help him, not to come near.

He would only hurt himself. Many sorrows will be to a wicked person, the person who will not trust in the Lord to receive His word, but the person who trusts in the Lord shall know God's mercy surrounding them. They can be glad and rejoice, because they know that they have been saved from all of their sins by faith. They now understand that very really and very practically, that God is leading them and teaching them. They learn to walk by faith, and not by sight. And when you see that your heart is changing, that you are learning the new attitudes of humility, and patience, and kindness, and Christian love; when you are learning by faith to fear God and to turn away from iniquity, then you will shout for joy, because you will know that it is God who has brought about this blessed change in you.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Pride's path is very dangerous because it will lead you to view others, who have your true interest at heart, with suspicion.** (verse 3)

Azariah and Johanan say to Jeremiah – “But Baruch the son of Neriah has set you against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, they may put us to death or carry us away captive to Babylon.” Now, I believe that this statement of theirs was based upon unfounded evil suspicions that they had against a man who was looking out for their best interests. You will recall that Baruch was a scribe and that he was the man who wrote down the words of the Lord, it says in Jeremiah 36: 8. He wrote down the words of Jeremiah, it says in chapter 36, verse 10. He wrote them down in a book when Jeremiah was confined in prison. And he read them to all the people in Jerusalem on the day of a fast when Jehoiakim was still king. Azariah and Johanan were probably there that day and heard the words of the Lord.

Jehoiakim was the king who cut up the scroll and threw it into the fire. But Baruch was probably was probably looked upon with suspicion because he was reinforcing the message of Jeremiah, and after all, he thought, they might be part of a conspiracy to betray them to the Chaldeans. In chapter 38, verse 2, Jeremiah had spoken to all the people that, “He who remained in the city of Jerusalem would die by the sword, by famine and by pestilence; but the person who went over to the Chaldeans would live; his life would be as a prize to him.” So, you see, this was what caused Azariah and Johanan to leave the city with the remnant and go out into the fields to dwell. When they came back, it was because of Gedaliah's word that they would flourish if they came back. But now Gedaliah was dead, and they still did not think it wise to remain there, as the captives of the Chaldeans. In this decision, they leaned on their own understanding instead of listening to God's word.

What would have been the remedy for these proud men? It would have been, that they would stop and think about the fact that their evil suspicions concerning Baruch and Jeremiah were not good. They were unfounded. Evil suspicions of righteous men speaking in a Biblically truthful way to you, is actually a sin in God's sight. Jesus says in Matthew 15: 19, that it is from within, out of the heart of man that evil thoughts, dialogismoi (διαλογισμοί) in the Greek, proceed. This word can also be translated evil suspicions or evil reasonings. We should understand that it will not be our own evaluation of others; our being afraid of what others may

be saying to us or thinking about us, or what they might be planning in relation to us, that will help us through our decision making process, or give us a Christ-like attitude. It will avail to think more carefully about the words of the godly which are spoken to us, which are in line with God's authoritative and precious word. With whomever God's word is believed, acted upon, and held fast, there God will be with them.

In Isaiah 8: 9-15 it says – “Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces!” “Give ear, all you from far countries.” “Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces.” “Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak the word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.” “For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: ‘Do not say, ‘A conspiracy,’ Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” “And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.”

In this passage we find that king Ahaz and the people were forsaking God and seeking the king of Assyria's help against Judah. Isaiah and the true remnant of God's children who were left, are told not to fear the conspiracy of the ten tribes of Israel under Pekin; their uniting with Rezin, the king of Syria, against them. This was the conspiracy that is being talked about here. They were not to fear what others feared; that Rezin and Pekin's plans would prevail, and God's people be entirely destroyed. What was the remedy for this fear. It would be for them not to join in the confederacy with ungodly men. Don't be afraid of their threats, don't be troubled. Do not fear what they fear. But rather, verse 13, they should hallow the Lord of hosts and He would be their fear, and He would be their dread. The same will be true with us.

God will be a sanctuary, He will be a Refuge, He will be a Dwelling Place, for all who trust in Him. This is the path of faith. This is what will strengthen your heart. But to engage in evil suspicions of God or good men, or to let fear rule your heart, this is not the right path to proceed on, for the Christian. Evil or unbelieving men will take counsel together, they will speak the word, but it will not stand. And the reason is, because God is with us. (Immanuel) Our Lord Jesus Christ is with us. And He is our Shield and Defender. Those who would not trust in the Lord for righteousness or strength in the days of His earthly ministry, He became to them a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. It is only pride which leads to suspicion of God, His word, and His appointed servants of His word.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – The path of pride is a very dangerous path because the souls and bodies of other people may be destroyed if you follow those who are proud.** (verses 5-7)

Verse 5 says that Johanan and all the captains of the forces (all the proud men) took with them, all the remnant of Judah, all the men, women, and children, the king's daughters, and even Jeremiah and Baruch as well. And they went to the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the Lord. We see here that proud men are just sinful enough, just stubborn enough, to want to take others with them in their disobedience. Proud men often like being in control, and having others under their control, even if it violates the consciences of those whom they have under their authority, or as it was in this case, those who they took them with them. The lesson that all of us should learn in this connection, is this: We should think about the consequences of pride, and not be so proud that we will not obey the voice of the Lord in His word, and His speaking to us by that word, to our mind and spirit, by His Spirit. We must be willing to follow His directions for our life.

Following proud men is not one of them. Why is it so bad? Because pride will always do damage, not only to ourselves, but also it will also hurt the people around us who we love. If a man is proud, like these men were proud, they will see others around them, even those whom

they profess to love, as possessions to be taken with them, and used to forward their own agenda. If a person is proud of their intelligence, they will think very highly of themselves, and they will look down on others. If they are proud of their wealth, they will not share with others. If they are proud of their strength, they will try to get others to acknowledge it, and to therefore somehow believe that the strong man must be the true leader. But this is not at all necessarily true. These men were intending to take everyone with them to Egypt, to the place where they believed they might be safe. But because they would not receive God's word from Jeremiah, God's servant, many of them would be destroyed. Proverbs 16: 18 – "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 16: 5 – "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; though they join in forces, none will go unpunished."

And so, we should ask ourselves, what is the remedy for those who have hurt others by their pride? It is found in seeking God for the grace to be humble, and to heed God's instruction. Job 33: 14-18 says – "For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it." "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction." "In order to turn man from his deed, and conceal pride from man, He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword." Now, notice how amazing and sovereign God is in His dealing with those whom He would save, or those Christians He wishes to teach. He will awaken them to the danger that their eternal soul is in. In order to do this, God may speak in one way, or in another way, by His providential ordering of things, and yet a man may not perceive it. But when He decides to open the ears of a person in regeneration, or even to open a Christians person's ears to hear that they are proud, He can most certainly do it.

In doing this, He, God, conceals pride from the man, turns him from his deed or from his purpose. The man says to himself: I know that I can do what I want to do in this situation. And then he thinks of his many fleshly strengths, and the way that he has reasoned through the situation, and so he justifies his own actions, not in the sight of God, but in his own sight. But then God intervenes with his plans and He interferes with what the man has determined to do by the strength of his own will, and he brings the man down in his estimation of his own abilities, or the strength of his reasonings, by showing him the better way that He has ordained for him, in trusting in His word. This is what God does for all of His dear people through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is for us to respond to His good teaching.

Verse 23 of Job 33, Elihu says to Job – "If there is a messenger for him, a mediator, one among a thousand, to show man His (that is, God's) uprightness, then He is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom; His flesh shall be young like a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth.'" He shall pray to God, and he (that is the person who was sinful and repented, or afflicted by God and comes through it) will delight in him, he shall see His face with joy, for He restores to man His righteousness." (That is, in the man's trusting that Christ's righteousness is the only real righteousness) "Then he looks at men and says, I have sinned, and perverted what was right and it did not profit me." "He will redeem his soul from going down to the Pit, and his life shall see the light." "Behold, God works all these things, twice, in fact, three times with a man, to bring back his soul from the Pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of life." Ah, how glorious is the path of a man who comes to have saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He does indeed have light coming to him from the Light of Life, because the Lord Jesus went to the cross for sins and for sinners, and one of those sins is pride, and he was one of those persons who was on the path of pride, but got off it.

**4<sup>th</sup> – The path of pride is dangerous because God Himself will bring judgments against it, both in this life and the next.**

Verse 8 says – "Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, "Take large stones in your hand, and hide them in the sight of the men of Judah, in the clay in the brick

courtyard which is at the entrance to Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes; and say to them, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Behold I will send and bring Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will set his throne above these stones that I have hidden.'" "And he will spread his royal pavilion over them." "When comes, he shall strike the land of Egypt and deliver to death those appointed for death, and to captivity those appointed for captivity, and the sword those appointed for the sword." "I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them and carry them away captive." "And he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on his garment, and he shall go out from there in peace." "He shall also break the sacred pillars of Beth Shemesh that are in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians he shall burn with fire."

You know, it doesn't matter how strong a country is, God can raise up another one to be stronger, and to conquer that first strong country if pride is the entrenched sin of the people and her leaders. God would use Nebuchadnezzar, whom He calls His servant, to come over to Egypt, and he would put his throne right over the stones which Jeremiah had hidden in the clay of the courtyard at the entrance of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes. All of the idols of the land of Egypt would be burned, all the houses which housed their idols, he would burn them, and carry them away captive. The sacred pillars would be broken down at Beth Shemesh, as well, and Nebuchadnezzar would array himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd puts on his garment. It would be that easy for him. And so, Azariah and Johanan and all the proud men would accomplish nothing by their moving to Egypt, except to endanger the lives and the souls of all who were with them.

How important then, it is my friends, that we do not live according to our own feeble ideas of what God's great plans are, in a time of national judgments, but that we learn to live humbly in accordance with God's word, even though it may not seem to make sense to us at this time. God will, in time, cause us to understand why He has ordered things the way that he has, in according with His eternal purpose, in His own good time. And so, each of us needs to ask the question: What will I do? Which path will I take? Will I take the path of pride which leads down to destruction, or will I take the path of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which leads to humility, but also to having great peace and joy in serving God in truth. Proverbs 18: 12 says – "Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility."

**William Cowper, the poet says –**

*"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm."*

*"Deep in unfathomable mines of never failing skill He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will."*

*"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head."*

*"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for His grace; behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face."*

*"His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour; the bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower."*