

THE FIRST ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

(Jer. 39:15-18)

Introduction:

1. Surely we have all heard about the Ethiopian eunuch. How he was leaving the Passover Feast and was met by Philip miraculously in order to teach him about the man he was seeking (Jesus); and how when he learned he immediately obeyed and went down into the water.
2. But have we all heard about the first Ethiopian eunuch? Did you know there is an Ethiopian eunuch in the Old and the New Testament?
3. Let us this morning consider Ebed-Melech, the first Ethiopian eunuch, by looking in to who he was, what he did, and what we can learn from him.

Discussion:

I. Who he was.

- A. Ebed-Melech = “servant of the king” was as his name implies, a servant of King Zedekiah of Judah (Jer. 38:5, 7). King Zedekiah was made king by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
 1. Good King Hezekiah’s (survivor of Assyrian siege) son Manasseh (was wicked but later repented after captivity to Babylon with hooks and fetters) was followed by his wicked son Amon (killed by his own servants) who was followed by good King Josiah (who found a book of the law while restoring the temple, and sought to restore Judah to a right relationship with God). Because of his tender heart God had Josiah killed in battle with Egypt so that he would not have to see the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Josiah’s son Jehoahaz became king but was deposed by the Pharaoh of Egypt, who installed Jehoahaz’s brother Jehoiakim as King of Judah. Jehoiakim was carried into captivity to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar and was replaced by Jehoiachin his son. Jehoiachin was carried away into captivity and was replaced by his uncle Zedekiah.
 2. Bad times for Judah. In the long line of kings above only Hezekiah and Josiah were godly kings. All the rest did evil in the sight of the Lord. Thus, the end is coming soon for Jerusalem.
- B. He was an Ethiopian eunuch (Jer. 38:7). He was “one of the eunuchs” in the king’s house. Eunuch originally meant one who had been castrated but came to mean simply an “official” (Brown-Driver-Briggs).
- C. That is all we know of this man. He was an Ethiopian who somehow became a servant (an official working for) king Zedekiah of Judah; Ebed-Melech may not even be his real name, but one given to him (cp. Dan. 1:7).

II. What he did.

- A. He heard that Jeremiah, the prophet of God, had been thrown into the dungeon (the miry cistern) and went to King Zedekiah to ask for mercy.
- B. King Zedekiah gave him permission to take 30 men and lift Jeremiah out of the dungeon. Ebed-Melech did so and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.
- C. Ebed-Melech was saved from the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem per the command of God (Jer. 39:15-18).

III. What we can learn from him.

- A. Even during bad times it is always appropriate to do good.
 1. Remember why Jeremiah is in the dungeon. He has been advocating that Jerusalem open her gates and surrender to the Babylonians, lest they all die. This was not a popular sentiment during Judah’s fight with Babylon. Jeremiah has been imprisoned (and hopefully killed) to stop his negative preaching.
 3. Think of the courage it took to ask (Jer. 38:12), let alone the long walk to save Jeremiah.
 4. Ebed-Melech’s “courage” was tied to his faith/trust in God (Jer. 39:18; cp. Josh. 1:6-9; Rev. 2:10).

- B. The kindness of Ebed-Melech speaks a lot about his godly character (Jer. 38:12; cp. Rom. 12:9ff; Gal. 5:22, 23).
- C. God always rewards faithfulness (Jer. 39:17, 18; Heb. 11:6; 1 Cor. 15:58).

Conclusion:

1. This story, and other similar stories ought to touch us deeply. The tender thoughtfulness of our God toward the faithful should aid us in our struggles with the principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness.
2. Also, we see the practical aspect of our faith. Ebed-Melech was not rewarded because of his faithful worship, but because of his faithful living (cp. Matt. 25:31-46).
3. Invitation.