

Jeremiah 20:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

Analysis

This verse shifts from Pashur's persecution (vv. 1-6) to Jeremiah's lament, revealing the prophet's inner turmoil. The phrase 'I heard the defaming of many' (dibbat rabbim, דִּבְתָּ רַבִּים) describes widespread slander and false accusation. 'Fear on every side' (magor missabib, מָגֹר מִסְבֵּב) ironically repeats the very name Jeremiah gave Pashur (v. 3)—now Jeremiah himself experiences the terror he prophesied for others. The command 'Report, and we will report it' reveals a conspiracy to gather accusations against Jeremiah. The phrase 'all my familiars' (literally 'men of my peace,' anshei shelomi, אָנְשֵׁי שְׁלֹמִי) is particularly painful—those who should have been allies had become enemies. The verb 'watched for my halting' (shomrim tseli, שׁׁמְרִים צְלָעִי) means watching for stumbling or weakness. The quote 'Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge' reveals their motive: not truth-seeking but entrapment and retaliation. This verse demonstrates the cost of prophetic ministry—isolation, betrayal, slander, and conspiracy. Yet Jeremiah persisted. This anticipates Jesus' experience of betrayal (John 13:18, quoting Psalm 41:9) and Paul's repeated abandonment (2 Timothy 4:10, 16).

Historical Context

The phrase 'all my familiars watched for my halting' echoes Psalm 41:9, which speaks of a close friend's betrayal—language later applied to Judas's betrayal of Jesus (John 13:18). In Jeremiah's context, this likely refers to other prophets, priests, and officials who saw him as threat to their positions and theology. The conspiracy to 'report' suggests gathering evidence for legal accusation, as later attempted in chapter 26 when they tried to execute Jeremiah for prophesying against the temple. Similar conspiracies opposed other prophets: Amos was reported to King Jeroboam (Amos 7:10-11), Elijah was hunted by Jezebel (1 Kings 19:2), Jesus faced coordinated opposition from religious leaders (Mark 11:18, 14:1). Early church leaders experienced identical treatment: Peter and John arrested for preaching (Acts 4:1-3), Stephen accused by false witnesses (Acts 6:11-14), Paul repeatedly plotted against (Acts 23:12-15). The isolation of standing alone for God's truth against religious majority is one of faithfulness's hardest tests. Jeremiah's transparency about this struggle encourages believers facing similar isolation.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jeremiah's experience of betrayal by "familiars" prepare us for the reality that faithful biblical witness may cost us friendships and reputation?
2. What does the conspiracy to "watch for his halting" teach about how opposition often seeks to trap and discredit God's messengers rather than engage their message honestly?

3. In what ways does Jeremiah's honesty about fear and isolation ("terror on every side") encourage believers who face opposition and feel alone?

Interlinear Text

וְנִגְדֵּל כֵּן	מִסְבֵּב	מָגָר	בְּבִים	דָּבָר	שְׁמָעַתִּי כֵּן
H3588 For I heard	H8085 the defaming	H1681 of many	H7227 fear	H4032 on every side	H5046 Report
אֹלֵל כָּלָעַ שְׁמָךְ שְׁלָמִים כֵּן וְשָׁלָמִים כֵּן					
Report H3605 it All my familiars	H582	H7965 watched	H8104	H6761	H194
וְנִפְתָּח לֹא יְכַלֵּה					
saying Peradventure he will be enticed		and we shall prevail		H0	
H6601		H3201			
מִקְרָב נִקְרָת כֵּן					
against him and we shall take		our revenge		H4480	
H3947	H5360				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 31:13 (Parallel theme): For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

Psalms 41:9 (Parallel theme): Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Isaiah 29:21 (Parallel theme): That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.

Jeremiah 18:18 (Parallel theme): Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

Acts 24:13 (Parallel theme): Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

Proverbs 10:18 (Parallel theme): He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

Jeremiah 6:25 (Parallel theme): Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side.

Ezekiel 22:9 (Parallel theme): In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.

Job 19:19 (Parallel theme): All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.

Luke 20:20 (Parallel theme): And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org