

Jeremiah 38:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

Analysis

The officials' accusation that Jeremiah 'weakeneth the hands' of soldiers and people charges him with treason. From their perspective, prophesying surrender undermines morale and national defense. Yet Jeremiah seeks the people's welfare (shalom) by calling them to submit to God's will rather than resist it. Sometimes God's welfare differs from worldly prosperity. Truth-telling may appear to harm the cause while actually serving it.

Historical Context

This accusation led to Jeremiah being thrown into a muddy cistern to die. Prophetic ministry often appears disloyal to earthly kingdoms while serving the heavenly kingdom.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. When has speaking God's truth been perceived as disloyalty or harmful?
2. How do you navigate the tension between patriotism and prophetic witness?

Interlinear Text

אֶת נָא י וּמַת הֵמָּלֶךְ אֶל הַשָּׂרִים וַיֹּאמֶר ו
said Therefore the princes H413 unto the king be put to death H4994 H853
H559 H8269 H4428 H4191

מְרַפֵּא מַרְפֵּא הוּא כִּן עַל כִּי הִזָּה הָאֵל יֵשׁ
We beseech thee let this man H2088 H3588 H5921 for thus H1931 he weakeneth
H376 H3651 H7503

הַנִּשְׁאָרִים הַמִּלְחָמָה הָאֵל יֵשׁ יָדַי וְאֶת
H853 and the hands We beseech thee let this man of war that remain
H3027 H376 H4421 H7604

לִדְבַר לָעָם כָּל יָדַי וְאֶת הַזֶּה אֵת בָּעִיר
in this city H2063 H853 and the hands H3605 of all the people in speaking
H5892 H3027 H5971 H1696

הִזָּה הָאֵל יֵשׁ כִּי יֵשׁ הָאֵל לָהּ כְּדִבְרֵי אֵלֶיהָ
H413 such words H428 H3588 We beseech thee let this man H2088
H1697 H376

אֵם כִּי הִזָּה לָעָם לְשַׁלּוֹם דֶּרֶשׁ אֵין נוֹ
H369 seeketh not the welfare of all the people H2088 H3588 H518
H1875 H7965 H5971

לְרָעָה:
but the hurt
H7451

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 26:11 (Parallel theme): Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

Acts 16:20 (Parallel theme): And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

Jeremiah 29:7 (Parallel theme): And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

Nehemiah 6:9 (Parallel theme): For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

Exodus 5:4 (Kingdom): And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens.

Amos 7:10 (Kingdom): Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

1 Kings 21:20 (Parallel theme): And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.