

Jeremiah 40:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.

Analysis

Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. This verse presents Jeremiah's choice after Jerusalem's fall: join the exiles in Babylon with royal provision, or remain in devastated Judah under Gedaliah's governorship. Nebuzar-adan's offer reflects remarkable respect for the prophet whose message aligned with Babylon's interests (though from divine rather than political motivation). The phrase "wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee" grants extraordinary freedom to God's faithful spokesman.

Jeremiah's choice to remain with the remnant (verse 6) demonstrates pastoral faithfulness. Though exile to Babylon offered comfort and safety, Jeremiah chose to stay with the poorest and most vulnerable, serving the shattered community. This self-sacrificial choice exemplifies Christ's incarnation and the apostle Paul's commitment to remain for the churches' sake (Philippians 1:24-25).

Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. Faithfulness to God's word sometimes brings unexpected honor, even from unlikely sources
2. true ministry prioritizes people's needs over personal comfort
3. freedom to choose should be guided by love and call, not mere convenience
4. God vindicates faithful servants, sometimes in surprising ways.

The Reformed understanding of vocation emphasizes serving where called, not where comfortable.

Historical Context

Gedaliah son of Ahikam (from the family that protected Jeremiah earlier, 26:24) governed the Judean remnant under Babylonian authority (587-582 BCE). Mizpah became the temporary administrative center since Jerusalem lay in ruins. Jeremiah's decision to remain rather than accept Babylonian hospitality shows his commitment to Israel despite having every reason to abandon them.

Tragically, Gedaliah's governorship ended in assassination by Jewish nationalists (41:1-3), forcing the remnant (including Jeremiah) to flee to Egypt against his counsel (43:1-7). The prophet's faithfulness to remain with his people thus led to forced exile in Egypt, where tradition suggests he died. His life exemplifies costly faithfulness—choosing difficult duty over comfortable safety, serving to the end despite persistent rejection.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Jeremiah's choice of pastoral duty over personal comfort challenge Christian leadership and service priorities?
2. In what ways does God sometimes vindicate faithful servants through unexpected sources or means?
3. How should understanding vocation as calling rather than convenience shape career and ministry decisions?

Interlinear Text

וְעוֹד בּוֹ לֹא וְשֶׁבַח
H5750 H3808 **Now while he was not yet gone back**
H7725

וְשֶׁבַח אֶל גְּדַלְיָה בֶן אַחִיקָם
H7725 H413 H1436 H1121 H296 **Now while he was not yet gone back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam**

בֶּן שַׁפָּן אֲשֶׁר הִפְקֵן יָד מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל
H1121 H8227 H834 H6485 H4428 H894 **the son of Shaphan whom the king hath made governor of Babylon**

אֲוֹ הָעָם בֵּית וְיָ אִתּוֹ וְשָׁב יְהוּדָה בְּעָרֶיהָ
H176 H5971 H8432 H854 H3427 H3063 H5892 **the people with him among the cities of Judah and dwell over the cities**

וַיִּתֵּן לָהּ לָלֶכֶת בְּעֵינֵי יָגֵר כֹּל אֶל
H5414 H1980 H1980 H5869 H3477 H3605 H413 **gave her to go with her wherever it seemeth convenient**

וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ: וּמִשָּׂא תֶּאֱרָם טַבַּחַיִם רַב לֹא
H7971 H4864 H737 H2876 H7227 H0 **and let him go and a reward him victuals of the guard So the captain**

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 39:14 (Parallel theme): Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people.

Jeremiah 41:2 (Kingdom): Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

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