

Jeremiah 42:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:)

Analysis

Jeremiah's description of the remnant's request—'And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:)'—combines apparent humility with subtle manipulation. The phrase 'we beseech thee' suggests humble petition, and their self-description as 'but a few of many' acknowledges their desperate circumstance. The parenthetical '(for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:)' appeals to Jeremiah's compassion, highlighting their vulnerability. However, calling God 'the LORD thy God' rather than 'our God' suggests psychological distance—they viewed Jeremiah as having special access to God they lacked, possibly indicating they didn't see themselves as full covenant partners. Their request that Jeremiah pray 'for us' rather than with them reinforces this distance. The phrase 'let our supplication be accepted before thee' makes Jeremiah the mediator, appropriate for his prophetic role but also potentially placing pressure on him to deliver favorable words. This entire approach—emphasizing their pitiful state, appealing to Jeremiah's compassion, positioning him as intercessor—aimed to evoke favorable response. Yet God's will doesn't bend to human need or emotional manipulation; He speaks truth regardless of circumstances.

Historical Context

The remnant's self-description as 'a few of many' accurately reflected Judah's catastrophic population loss. Before Babylon's invasions, Judah's population likely numbered 200,000-250,000. Three waves of deportation (605, 597, 586 BC) removed tens of thousands, Jerusalem's siege killed many thousands through violence and starvation, and Ishmael's recent massacre eliminated more. The remnant now approaching Jeremiah perhaps numbered only a few thousand at most. Their reference to 'thine eyes do behold us' indicates Jeremiah witnessed their reduced state, adding emotional weight to their appeal. Calling God 'the LORD thy God' echoed Israelite practice of identifying God through His relationship with prophets or patriarchs (the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Exodus 3:6). However, in contexts where speakers should claim personal covenant relationship, this distancing language reveals spiritual alienation. Their position near Bethlehem, already on the Egypt route, showed their physical posture contradicted their verbal deference—they were positioned for flight, not patient waiting for divine direction. This body-language versus verbal-claim dissonance revealed their true intentions despite pious words.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does calling God 'thy God' rather than 'our God' reveal spiritual distance and failure to claim personal covenant relationship?
2. What does this passage teach about the danger of emphasizing our desperate circumstances as leverage for favorable divine response rather than submitting to His will regardless?
3. In what ways do believers today use emotional appeals or emphasis on suffering to manipulate God or His representatives rather than genuinely submitting to His purposes?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר וְ	אֶל	יִרְמְיָהוּ הוּ	הַנָּבִיא	תִּפְּל	נָ א
And said	H413	unto Jeremiah	the prophet	be accepted	H4994
H559		H3414	H5030	H5307	
תְּחִנֵּת נֹ		לִפְנֵי יְ	וְהִתְפַּלֵּל ל	בְּעֵד נֹ	אֶל
Let we beseech thee our supplication		before	thee and pray	H1157	H413
H8467		H6440	H6419		
יְהוָה ה		אֱלֹהֵי יְ	כָל בְּעַד	הַשָּׂאֵר יֵת	הֵזֶאת
for us unto the LORD		thy God	H1157	even for all this remnant	H2063
H3068		H430	H3605	H7611	
כִּי	נִשָּׂא רְנוֹ	מְעַט	מְהֻרָּבִים ה	כַּאֲשֶׁר יְ	רֹא וְתִ
H3588	for we are left	but a few	of many	H834	as thine eyes do behold
	H7604	H4592	H7235	H5869	H7200
אֲתָנוּ:					
H853					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 36:7 (References Lord): It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people.

Leviticus 26:22 (Parallel theme): I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.

Isaiah 1:9 (References Lord): Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Isaiah 37:4 (Prayer): It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living

God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.

Acts 8:24 (Prayer): Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

James 5:16 (Prayer): Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Lamentations 1:1 (Parallel theme): How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!

1 Samuel 7:8 (References God): And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

1 Samuel 12:19 (Prayer): And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.

Jeremiah 37:3 (Prayer): And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us.