

Baruch - The Complex Servant

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[0 : 00] We ended at verse 5 of chapter 45 where God is saying, Jeremiah to Baruch, and you seek great things for yourself, seek them not.

For behold, I am bringing disaster upon all flesh, declares the Lord. I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you may go.

So, last Lord's Day morning we began a short series on looking at the way that God deals with isolated individuals.

We might say individuals who we see in Scripture who act alone against a numerically greater enemy. If you remember last Lord's Day morning we looked at the individual Shamgar, the judge, the deliverer, the non-Israelite convert who saved Israel from the Philistines, numerically a much greater force.

One man against this mighty Philistine force. Shamgar showed courage, he showed commitment, he showed that he was a faithful follower of the one true God, and yet in the midst of his faithfulness, the people of Israel had wandered, had wandered far from God in their unfaithfulness.

[1 : 30] And we drew from that story of Shamgar the lessons that, you know, for you, for me to take, the many times that God will use individuals, that God will bless even individual Christians.

When Christians act alone, of course, in strength of God the Lord, but acting alone in that courageous stand for truth. So, if you even know, I'm sure individuals even now are taking a stand for truth against what appears to be a mighty force, and yet standing in courage, standing knowing that God is with that person, standing for the Lord Jesus.

Of course, we saw in the story of Shamgar, Shamgar the deliverer, Shamgar the saviour of Israel, we saw in that story the pointing to the Lord Jesus. One man who saved the world.

One man by his total commitment to his Father's will and saved, and has saved his people eternally. So, we're going to, again, go through this theme.

An individual believer standing alone in the face of the enemy, doing so through the enabling strength of God. We'll do it, God willing, today.

[2 : 49] Next week, looking at one particular individual, this man, Baruch. This man, again, one of the lesser known individuals in the Bible. This man who was the prophet Jeremiah's secretary.

And that title secretary was a high rank in Judean society. Again, we'll look at this in more detail in a moment. We don't really read much about Baruch, but we certainly do as we read through how God was with him.

We learn, again, of God's ways with his people. We see God raising up individuals to serve him, even in difficult circumstances.

Even standing alone against a fierce enemy. Even when, and as we'll see in Baruch's case, even when these individuals, like me, like you, are very complex individuals, complex believers.

Yes, having a right standing before God through faith in the Lord Jesus. And yet, within our hearts, nurturing, we might even say, nurturing the complexities of sin that so often contradicts our faith, as we'll see here in Baruch's case.

[3 : 58] Now, as we say next, Lord's Day, God willing, we'll look at the remainder of chapter 36 that we didn't read today. That is a slightly different timescale to the first eight verses, and certainly chapter 45.

We'll see very much Baruch standing alone against a mighty opposition. But this morning, we're going to look at what we see in this man Baruch.

You've got your headings and your notice sheet there. We'll see the sorrow of this faithful believer, sorrow over what God has promised to do to the people of Judah and Lester's repentance.

We'll see Jeremiah, rather Baruch, being rebuked in God's faithfulness, God dealing with Baruch in a particular weakness of Baruch. And then we'll see the reward that God gives this faithful servant of God.

So, before we do that, we need to obviously look at the background. And, you've got to obviously understand the context. And the context, of course, is that the people of Judah have been repeatedly warned by the prophet Jeremiah to turn from their wicked ways, return to the Lord, otherwise God's going to bring disaster on the nation.

[5 : 17] Now, a hundred years previous to this, Judah's northern neighbour, Israel, they'd already been conquered by an enemy. The Assyrian Empire had conquered Israel.

The people taken into exile. Or certainly the cream of Israelite society, taken into exile. God had punished the nation of Israel for its willful disobedience to God because the people had worshipped false gods, the gods of their neighbours.

And now the people of Judah, Israel's southern neighbour, they're facing similar punishment for their similar disobedience. And a further call from God to the people to repent and turn to him, where we see it in chapter 36, we read there of Jeremiah being directed by God to have written on a scroll, again, God's warnings to the people.

But unless they repent and return to God, disaster's going to befall them as a nation. But as we read in chapter 36, Jeremiah has a problem.

He's banned. He's banned from going to the temple to read out what God has given him to write on the scroll. Why is he banned? Well, we can work it out, I think, from chapter 7.

[6 : 40] Jeremiah, if you're reading chapter 7, had been speaking against the temple authorities. He'd been speaking against them for their misuse of their position. He called the temple a den of robbers.

He condemned the people as a nation for putting their trust in the temple as some kind of guarantor of God's, you know, constant provision for them, for their safety.

So Jeremiah's forbidden to go to the temple. But he's going to send his secretary, he's going to send Baruch. And it's Baruch who writes down what God has given Jeremiah to say to the people. Very interesting. It may well be that Baruch's fingerprint is actually still seen to this day. There's a little clay tablet and all with his name written on it.

So this Baruch, we might forget him, as it were, in many ways, but interestingly, this man's fingerprint may well still be seen he was a secretary.

[7 : 45] He had a position of distinction in Judean society. So he's going to write down what Jeremiah dictates to him and he's going to go to the temple and the presence of the people is going to read what God is saying to them.

Well, that's the background. That's the background. Next week, God willing, we'll see what happens when Baruch reads from the scroll, not just to the people, but to the king as well.

And what the king does, leave that till next week. But we need to jump to chapter 45. Okay? I suppose you can look at it two ways. You can either see chapter 45 and the first part of 36 of like bookends, all right, connecting what's all in the middle.

Maybe you might want to think of two jigsaw pieces connecting together. Whatever way you look at it, they are connected. So what do we read in chapter 45? What do we see? We see the sorrow.

We see the sorrow of a faithful believer. You see that in verse, certainly in verse 3. Okay? Verse 3. So, Jeremiah's been dictating to Baruch the word that Jeremiah's received from God.

[8 : 56] Okay? The word that's to be given to the people. And if you read there from verse 45, you see that Baruch is expressing lament.

He's lamenting. He's in agony. He's receiving these words. Woe is me, for the Lord has added sorrow to my pain. I'm weary with my groaning and I find no rest. So, why is Baruch in this particular condition?

Why has he got this anguish in his heart? Well, just think of the situation that, think of what God is saying to the people.

The message that God is giving to the people. This long catalogue of their sins and the consequence of refusing to repent and return to him. Baruch's affected by what he's writing down.

I mean, Jeremiah had a similar experience. You go back to chapter 4 when Jeremiah was proclaiming judgment against the people for their sins. Jeremiah said almost exactly the same thing.

[9 : 57] My anguish, my anguish, I writhe in pain. Oh, the walls of my heart, my heart is beating wildly. I can't keep silent, but I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

And, you know, you can just picture their faithful barricades, you know, writing down in the parchment, the words of judgment, these words of condemnation. words that are condemning the people of Judah for their turning away from God.

There's grief in his heart. Because he's aware that unless the people repent, God's going to send calamity in the nation. Of course, that grief is a characteristic of a faithful believer who mourns the, what he sees around him in the evil of a nation.

And the word of God's neglected. God's forgotten. Think of the grief of the Lord Jesus. And he mourned over Judah's capital, Jerusalem, many centuries later.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings?

[11 : 10] And you would not. Jesus was grieved over the refusal of the people of Jerusalem in his day, on earth, and they're rejecting him as the Christ, as the Messiah.

And if you and I have any Christ-likeness in our hearts, we're going to grieve. We must grieve. We must mourn over the refusal of the land in which we're living.

Refusal of the many to repent and turn to the Lord Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Are you repenting? Am I mourning over the sins of our nation as much as I mourn over the sins of my heart?

You know, when you see day after day in our media, in our various channels of communication, groups, secular societies, and so on, just another attack on God and his word, the Lord Jesus.

Don't you grieve in your heart? Don't you grieve when you see this blatant attack on the truth of God's word? Aren't you filled with anguish when the word of God is sidelined for the word of man?

[12 : 22] Even when we hear voices within even our own churches, voices that want nothing to do with the truth of God's word.

And it has to be said that if we're not grieving over the sin of the nation, if we're just unconcerned about the drifting further and further away from God's word, if we're not mourning over what we see in our governments, and our educators, and our media, even in our churches, if we're not mourning, if we're not grieving, then we have to say that we're backslidden in our hearts.

But if you, if I'm to be a follower of the Lord Jesus, then we will mourn, we will grieve. We will grieve over the sin around us. Again, when we think of the Lord Jesus, Jesus, the man of sorrows, the one man who was acquainted with grief.

Isaiah, the prophet, foretold of the Lord Jesus in that aspect. Why was Jesus a man of sorrows? He was a man of sorrows because of sin. The sin that he came to bear on our behalf in order to save us.

Jesus suffered anguish because of sin. Of course, it was seen so dramatically in the garden of Gethsemane, when he was in deep anguish of soul, his sweat pouring out like great drops of blood.

[13 : 43] That was the intensity of his anguish at the prospect of his sin bearing. Well, there in another part of Jerusalem, six centuries before Gethsemane, Baruch is in anguish.

You can read there, he can't settle, he's confided in Jeremiah, what he's writing has actually given him pain. He's worn out, he says, he's worn out with grief.

He just can't rest, he can't settle. So what's the solution? What's the answer to his grief? Well, quite simply, if we read on in the passage, we can say this, I suppose, like this, Baruch, your anguish is real, yes, but think of God.

Think of what God is dealing with, in dealing with his own people. See, verse 4, thus says the Lord, behold, what I have built, I'm breaking down, and what I have planted, I'm plucking up. It's the whole land.

I mean, God had built, as it were, God had built his people as a nation. Because of their unfaithfulness, the nation is going to be broken. It's going to be broken down by God.

[14 : 55] God had planted a people in that land. But what God had planted, God will uproot. Again, because of the unfaithfulness of his people. So God is grieved over his people.

So Baruch has to realize that, yes, he's pained. He's pained at what's happening, but he has to remember that God is infinitely more grieved because of the sins of his people.

The people that God built as a people, the people he planted in that land, the land of promise. What God has planted, God will destroy and uproot.

Isn't that a corrective lesson for us all? Think of God's grief, the sin of man, greater than any grief that you and I can harbour in our hearts over sin.

Yes, we must grieve over sin. Sin in our own hearts, sin that we see all around us. But remember, the Lord's concern for his people when we wander, that concern is great, great concern.

[16:03] Yes, we have to guard our hearts against sin. But be aware that God is grieved over our sins, whether it's national sins or individual sins.

And it's for you, for me, to be salt of the earth, to seek that the nation will not grieve God, that we will seek to be witnesses, to proclaim the Lord's justice, the Lord's faithfulness, yes, and the Lord's judgment against sin.

I mean, how much must God be grieved over the sin in our own land? It's a land that has known repeatedly God's blessings. And yet, the same land, the same nation spurned these blessings. We are inviting God's judgment upon us. And so we plead, for you, for me, to plead that God would avert his wrath against us, that God would restore us to himself.

So we are to mourn over sin as Baruch mourned over sin. But you know, if you look carefully at chapter 45, you realize that there was something else that caused Baruch to be in anguish.

[17:16] And it was about himself. It was about his own ambition. God was going to rebuke this complex man for that sin. Do you seek great things for yourself?

Seek them not, for behold, I'm bringing disaster upon all flesh, declares the Lord. What are we seeing here? We're seeing the rebuke of a faithful God. Now, please don't get me wrong, it's not wrong to have ambition.

Of course not. It's not wrong to have that desire to use the gifts that God has given you to use them for his glory. But when ambition becomes the focus of self-prime, when ambition becomes just a means for your self-glorification, with no desire to glorify God, that's where the fault lies.

And that's why Baruch was being rebuked by God. Because yes, Baruch's grief was a complex grief. Yes, he's grieving over the sin of his people, his fellow people of Judah.

But on the other hand, he's feeling grief about his own personal loss that should the invasion of the Babylonians happen, he himself is going to suffer in his personal ambitions.

[18:30] Personal ambitions are just going to be destroyed altogether. And you know, when you study the speech of Baruch closely, and then you tie it in with what you read elsewhere of Baruch, you can actually build up a picture and see where Baruch's complaints are coming from.

And as we do so, you'll see what true faith involves, what true dependence on God involves. It involves a humble heart. It involves a humble waiting on him.

And it's that recognition that God is sovereign. That you, that I, must be prepared to bow to his will in all things. So, what about Baruch's inclination of his heart that, you know, caused God to rebuke him?

Well, look at verse 5. Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. I mean, God's just informed Baruch that he's going to bring judgment on the people for their disobedience. It's going to bring a calamitous situation. God will bring judgment. He'll bring disaster on the land. And that disaster is going to mean that any personal ambition Baruch has for his own self-advancement is going to be gone, wiped away.

[19:45] And as we said, from Scripture, we can bring all this together. Even what we read, you know, about Baruch being the secretary. He was a very well-educated man. And, from all likelihood, from what, again, we can use the clues in Scripture that tell us he was from a noble family, trained as a scribe in responsibilities and legal matters.

He's got a very high position in Judean society. Even has close connections with the royal court through his brother. So, here's a man who'd expect to be given a position of high rank in public service in normal circumstances.

But, at the same time, he's a very self-centered man. You know, even back to that verse, verse 3, you know, the number of personal pronouns that he uses, I, me, my, you know, tells us that he's very focused on himself.

But, remember, these aren't normal circumstances. God's going to uproot the kingdom. The people are going to be exiled unless they repent. Well, they will be exiled as we know from scripture, from history.

Barak's not going to have his position of high rank that, obviously, he craved to have. The great things that he'd sought for himself are not going to happen. Why?

[21 : 02] Because of God's judgment on the nation. It's going to bring absolute disruption and destruction. So, this ambitious man, ambitious, ambitious, ambitious for his own glory, he's not going to see that ambition achieved because of God's sovereign purposes.

And, you know, there are many, many occasions in the sovereign purposes of God when God overrules the individual ambitions of his children.

And God's will is not my will. When the believer has to come before God in humility and say before him, yes, Lord, you know best.

You've done what is best in my life. It was the great Welsh preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones who once said that he thanked God for God closing doors to him that he thought he was just going to walk through because God knew what was truly best for him in the work that God had given him to do. Again and again, we're reminded of that great truth that, you know, that should characterize each and every believer, each and every servant of God. I must decrease, he must increase.

[22 : 12] And I'm sure you've known as I've known, great servants of God, humanly speaking, who haven't fulfilled what the world, you know, considers some kind of high standing according to their criteria of success.

But these same servants of God have followed the Lord Jesus and done so faithfully in serving him where God has sent him. Think of the Lord Jesus himself.

Think of Jesus who made himself nothing in coming to earth and human flesh. Think of these great words of Philippians 2 that tell us of that truth where Paul tells the Philippians do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing.

Taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross.

[23 : 31] If the eternal Son of God the all glorious Word of God if he could leave the glory of heaven and come to the sin stained earth and come in that humility a servant who am I?

Who are you to seek any elevation of status to satisfy some kind of selfish ambition? God doesn't work for each one of his children to do he's got a work for you to do and to do for his glory and he'll lead you in that work and it's for you and it's for me to bow humbly before God and say and come before that throne and say Lord yes I'm willing I'm willing to go where you send me to be where you want me to be and to come before him and say Lord shape me and fashion me not according to my selfishness but according to your glory for your glory for the sake of your name do you have that sincerity of heart to come before God and come before him with that prayer remember God isn't a God who seeks your heart he loves you he loves you as his child and he'll do for you he'll do for you as he's chosen in all eternity for your good and for his glory because his love is a perfect love it's a pure and true love and perhaps you'll never know until you reach heaven itself how much

God's love is so great a love that that love that cared for you so much that even at times and even many times you are kept from a certain course of action that you consider was right for you only for God to say no well God here yes he would humble Baruch he would humble Baruch in preventing his selfish ambitions from being realized that of course didn't mean to say that God would deny Baruch any blessing what Baruch's name means it means blessing or the word Baruch it's the same word blessing Baruch would be blessed Baruch would find this true portion of blessing yes yes from God but something other than worldly achievement what we read there in verse 5 we'd read that Baruch would be blessed and his life being preserved I will give you your life as a prize for war in all places to which you may go here's the reward for a faithful servant now yes

Baruch was a complex man yes he is on the one hand he's a faithful servant of God he served him in the midst of so much unfaithfulness around he's mourned over the calamity about to happen to Judah yet on the other hand he's a man of personal selfish ambition God's going to curb that selfishness in him God's going to humble him but God would restore Baruch God would deal with that weakness in him and God would save Baruch from the calamity that would face the people of Judah and we know that Baruch's life was spared and that's why you have that big gap between what we read in chapter 36 and chapter 45 because in between these chapters certainly in between verse 8 of chapter 36 and chapter 45 in between that big section then we read that disaster did fall in Judah Jerusalem the capital was captured by King Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon Baruch and Jeremiah survived that but then in disobedience to God's word the survivors from Judah they

actually went to Egypt to escape from the Babylonians even though they were commanded told by Judah told by Jeremiah not to do so God's word through Jeremiah and when God punished the Judean exiles in Egypt and by the way Jeremiah and Baruch were taken forcibly to Egypt okay God punished the Judean exiles in Egypt Baruch's life was spared and in fact if you read towards the end of chapter 44 you read there of God's promised punishment and all from Judah who'd gone to Egypt in utter disobedience to God's command especially you see that in verses 26 to 29 and yet what do you see immediately after do you see immediately after these words of judgment on the people of Judah for going to Egypt you see that God spares Baruch's life for his faithfulness in contrast to the unfaithfulness of the people of Judah whatever else you see here we see this we see God's care for individual believers

[28 : 22] God's care for his faithful servants one by one you who are loved by God you're loved one to one yes of course God's love is for all his children but that love reaches you as an individual the parables that Jesus taught you know the lost sheep and the lost coin what we see there in these parables the love of God to individuals we know that Jesus death on the cross was for all for who he died you can still say he died for me so you are a Baruch you who know the Lord Jesus as Savior you who know him as Lord you're a Baruch before God you're blessed by God you're blessed in salvation you're blessed in being delivered from eternal death through God's mercy and grace I pray you'll know that blessing the blessing of God towards you you'll know that salvation that God gives you through the faithfulness of Jesus and his utter obedience to his

Father's will Jesus gave himself for you and Jesus denied himself when Jesus took up his cross to do what he did for your eternal safety I pray as we have heard these words before us that we will know the God of blessing the God who blesses his people with his eternal love amen let us pray Lord we thank you for your word we thank you for the promises of your word we thank you too Lord for the rebuke that you give to your people even through your word may we know Lord truly that we are to decrease a new increase help us Lord by our word by our witness by our example to show forth the love of God in Christ in Christ Jesus help us Lord to be faithful forgive our unfaithfulness help us

Lord to do as we do in strength of God the Lord so continue with us Lord now we pray pardon again our many sins we ask in Jesus name amen now let's close in psalm 62 on page 80 and singing from verse 7 to 12 my honour and salvation rest on God my rock and mighty fort oh people trust in him always him alone pour out your heart 7 to 12 psalm 62 to God's praise ■■■ asto tes os i to as a re o and a o year should forward t t s des pas well to n s can c else c e

Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 38] Thank you. Thank you.

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