

NOTICE HOW GOD IS BOTH KIND AND SEVERE

TEXT: (II Chronicles 36:11-21, NIV)

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. ¹² He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD. ¹³ He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God's name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁴ Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. ¹⁷ He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁸ He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. ¹⁹ They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.

²⁰ He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power. ²¹ The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

KEY VERSE: "Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off" (Romans 11:22, NLT).

I. THE RISE AND DEMISE OF A YOUNG FOOLISH KING

A. His Heart Was Hardened

1. "He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD" (II Chronicles 36:12, NIV).
2. "Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man so far as obeying the Lord God of Israel was concerned, for he refused to follow him" (II Chronicles 36:13, TLB).
3. "He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing" (Proverbs 29:1, ESV).
4. "A person who will not bend after many warnings will suddenly be broken beyond repair" (Proverbs 29:1, GW).

B. He Defiled the Temple of the LORD

1. "I have thought deeply about all that goes on here in the world, where people have the power of injuring each other. I have seen wicked men buried, and as their friends returned from the cemetery, having forgotten all the dead man's evil deeds, these men were praised in the very city where they had committed their many crimes! How odd! Because God does not punish sinners instantly, people feel it is safe to do wrong. But though a man sins a hundred times and still lives, I know very well that those who fear God will be better off, unlike the wicked, who will not live long, good lives—their days shall pass away as quickly as shadows because they don't fear God" (Ecclesiastes 8:9-13, TLB).
2. "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough" (Galatians 5:9, NIV).

II. THE LORD SENT MESSENGERS

A. God's Love Extended

1. "The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy" (II Chronicles 36:15-16, NIV).
2. "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the LORD would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18, NIV).
3. "For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away" (Matthew 24:38-39, NIV).
4. "That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:39, NIV).

B. Sinners Always Mock the Righteous

1. "Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20, NIV).
2. "I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle" (I Samuel 17:28, NIV).
3. "As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. 'Get out of here, baldy!' they said. 'Get out of here, baldy!'" (II Kings 2:23, NIV).
4. "Never curse the king, not even in your thoughts, nor the rich man, either; for a little bird will tell them what you've said" (Ecclesiastes 10:20, TLB).
5. "He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys" (II Kings 2:24, NIV).

C. Discipline Out of Love

1. "For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child" (Hebrews 12:6, NLT).
2. "In a fury of anger, the king turned him over to the prison guards to be tortured until all his debt was repaid. In this same way, my heavenly Father will deal with any of you if you do not release forgiveness from your heart toward your fellow believer" (Matthew 18:34-35, TPT).
3. "But if you withhold forgiveness from others, your Father withholds forgiveness from you" (Matthew 6:15, TPT).

III. GOD JUDGED JUDAH'S REBELLION

1. "For you, a thousand years are as a passing day, as brief as a few night hours" (Psalm 90:4, NLT).
2. "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31, KJV).

A. Plans for You to Prosper

1. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you" (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).
2. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8, NIV).

3. "I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13, NLT).

B. Plans to Give You Hope

1. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope'" (Jeremiah 4:11-13, NIV).
2. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1, KJV).
3. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4, NIV).

C. Plans to Give You a Future

1. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).
2. "The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the LORD holds them by the hand" (Psalm 37:23-24, NLT).
3. "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed" (Psalm 37:25-26, NIV).

CONCLUSION

1. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48, NIV).