**The Ethiopian Eunuch**

If the title steered your mind toward the man Philip baptized in Acts chapter 8, I am not surprised. The conversion of Candace’s court official is pretty familiar to most Christians. But I would like to direct your attention to a man who was a court official in Jerusalem 600 years earlier. That man’s name was Ebed-melech (Jeremiah 38).

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah and he, like many before him, was a wicked king. God had sent the prophet Jeremiah with a simple message: The Babylonians are coming to destroy Jerusalem and carry you into captivity because of your rebellion before God and you must surrender to survive. Not a popular message and most were inclined to want to kill the messenger. Jeremiah needed a friend and Ebed-melech was just the man for the job.

The text reveals nothing about how a dark-skinned “kushi” from the south had managed to become an official in the Jewish government and that is not really relevant to the story. What is important is that he was a man who was willing to step up and do the right thing in dangerous times.

Some of the Jewish officials who were angry about Jeremiah’s prophecy approached the king and demanded the prophet’s death and Zedekiah was too cowardly or impotent to stop them. They proceeded to throw Jeremiah into an empty cistern where he sank into the muddy bottom and was left to die.

Where Zedekiah had been feckless and spineless, Ebed-melech was bold and courageous. As soon as he had heard of Jeremiah’s fate, he went straight to Zedekiah and said, “My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet whom they have cast into the cistern; and he will die right where he is because of the famine, for there is no more bread in the city.”

Confronted with right and truth, Zedekiah came to his senses and placed thirty men under Ebed-melech’s authority to rescue the man of God. They tied soft rags together for Jeremiah to wrap around himself and under his arms, then used a rope to gently pull him from the mud to safety. Ebed-melech had literally risked his own neck to save Jeremiah’s life and his kindness was acknowledged by Jehovah God Himself (Jeremiah 39:15-18).

2600 years have passed, but folks today could learn a lot from Ebed-melech:

**We should trust in God, not men.** God promised to keep Ebed-melech safe during the upheaval of conquest and He stated the reason: “Because you have trusted in Me.” Any confidence or allegiance not subject to our trust in God is misplaced.

**We must stand up for the righteous.** Ebed-melech’s defense of Jeremiah was the minority view but that didn’t stop him from taking a stand. Christ calls us to be humble and kind, but courageous at the same time.

**God is color blind.** Jeremiah is the one who asked, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” (Jeremiah 13:23) God is aware of the physical differences between us, He simply doesn’t care. Ebed-melech was judged, not by the color of his skin, but by the content of his character. We should be using the same standard of measure with one another.

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