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The Rescue of a Preacher

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A few years ago, I first gave a sermon in Africa about an African in the Bible named Ebed-Melech, a Cushite. He is not one of the immediate Bible characters that comes to mind if we were given a quick Bible quiz to name ten Bible characters! Yet since giving that sermon, I have had several of my African brothers and sisters continue to ask, “Will you please repeat the sermon about the African who rescued the preacher?”

Do you know the story? Jeremiah, a prophet of God, had been preaching faithfully the Lord’s message, and the people refused to listen to his message “to wait upon the Lord”. Some false charges were cooked up against Jeremiah, and he was thrown into an old water cistern – with hopes by his accusers that death in the mud would silence this preacher. Then comes the “but” in the story.

But there was a Cushite servant there watching all this. He followed his conscience – he could not let this go!

- The Conscience of One

This Cushite listened to the conscience within – that inner sense of being obligated to do right. He reminds me of the Good Samaritan – another foreigner – who followed his conscience to rescue the beaten man on the road (Luke 10).

History seems to be strewn with many who have silenced their consciences. Yet history also has many who have stood out boldly, followed their consciences and stood for what was written on their hearts concerning the Lord and His ways. The Cushite in our story listened to his conscience.

- The Voice of One

This Cushite rose up as the voice of one to speak up about the evil done against the preacher Jeremiah. He went to the king and made his appeal:

“My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into a cistern, where he will starve to death” (Jeremiah 38:9)

The Cushite’s words were incredibly direct, naming the deed done as wickedness, recognizing Jeremiah as God’s man and warning the king of the outcome. The king is now awakened and responds by rescuing Jeremiah out of the cistern.

“Rescue the weak and needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” (Psalm 82:4)

- The Blessing of One

There is no indication in the story that the Cushite was motivated by getting a reward. Rather, he just did what he knew was the right thing to do and showed mercy to the one in need. Yet, he did receive an incredible blessing – his life was spared when the Babylonians came and conquered the Israelites.

The Lord looks upon the heart. The Cushite servant could easily have been by-passed; yet he became a hero of faith, conscience, mercy and grace. God’s family was and continues to be made up of an incredible variety of peoples. This Cushite, Ebed-Melech, belonged to the family of God, and his part in the history of God’s people has been enshrined as the one who rescued a preacher. Where is your place in that family?

The Lord Jesus asked, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” Pointing to his disciples, He said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Have you taken your place as a brother or sister of the Lord Jesus, as a member of the family of God? We need to actively support and defend our brothers and sisters around the world.

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