

God's Message of Hope in Difficulties – Oct. 11, 2023

Some Scriptures have special meaning to us. This does for me.

Sometimes God allows difficulties in our lives to bring us back to Him.

- Sometimes God even plans those situations for us.

This is the story of **Jeremiah 29:11**:

“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.”

Backstory.

- Jeremiah 24 – 2 baskets of figs. 1 good, 1 bad. That's God's view.
 - **Good Figs** – vs 5-7 - *“I will treat them with kindness. 6 I will watch over them and bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not pull them up. 7 I will give them the desire to know that I am the Lord. Then they will be my people, and I will be their God, because they will return to me with all their heart.”*
 - **Bad Figs** – “too bad to be eaten.” Disaster awaits. War, disease, & starvation. Objects of ridicule, name will be cursed, jokes of them.

Why? Prophets – messengers of God - were ignored; tuned out God

- **Jer. 25** – *“But you have paid no attention. 4 You would not listen or pay attention, even though the Lord has continued to send you his servants the prophets. 5 They told you to turn from your wicked way of life & from the evil things you are doing, so that you could go on living in the land that the Lord gave you and your ancestors as a permanent possession. 6 They told you not to worship & serve other gods and not to make the Lord angry by worshiping the idols you had made. If you had obeyed the Lord, then he would not have punished you. 7 But the Lord himself says that you refused to listen to him. Instead, you made him angry with your idols and have brought his punishment on yourselves.”*
 - God gave opportunity after opportunity. 23 yrs of chances... message after message from Jeremiah.
 - Only so many chances to change our lives. But many!

The situation. King Nebuchadnezzar (King of Babylonia) takes captives.

The message from God: submit to that King. Surrender. **Jer. 27**

- Don't die in war or starvation or disease. You have a choice.
 - This situation gives us 7 deeper, spiritual truths:

7 Spiritual Truths:

1) – Submission leads to Salvation.

- a) Our trouble w/God is in taking control... our peace is in surrender.
 - i) **Jer. 27** - ⁵ *“By my great power and strength I created the world, human beings, and all the animals that live on the earth; and I give it to anyone I choose. ⁶ I am the one who has placed all these nations under the power of my servant, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia, and I have made even the wild animals serve him. ⁷ All nations will serve him, and they will serve his son and his grandson until the time comes for his own nation to fall. Then his nation will serve powerful nations and great kings. ⁸ “But if any nation or kingdom will not submit to his rule, then I will punish that nation by war, starvation, and disease until I have let Nebuchadnezzar destroy it completely.”*
 - ii) A heart that yields to God finds peace.
 - iii) We’re created to be dependent on God... we claim independence.
From beginning, created to have relationship w/Him

2) There is a purpose for the pain

- a) Captivity . . . discipline . . . is never **comfortable**. But there’s a reason.
- b) **“Time out”** is to stop behavior, but bring about different behavior.
- c) **Jer. 29** – vs 10 *“This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹ 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. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”*
- d) God’s **purpose** was to **restore a relationship** w/His people.
 - i) He still has that desire today . . . with us.
 - ii) He wants us to come to Him...call on Him ... pray to Him ... include Him.
 - iii) He wants His people to act like His people.

3) - There is an end ahead.

- a) You may be captive in Babylon, but it won’t last forever.
- b) 70 yrs decreed for Israel; God has decreed your time.
 - i) “His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime” – **Psm 30:5**

4) – Bring out the best.

- a) We sometimes make our captivity worse; it was **designed for better**.
- b) Jeremiah's letter – **Jer. 29** – vs 4 *“This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 “Build houses & settle down; plant gardens & eat what they produce. 6 Marry & have sons & daughters; find wives for your sons & give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons & daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace & prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, b/c if it prospers, you too will prosper.”*
 - i) **Designed to bring out the best in us, so we make life better.**
 - ii) **Bloom** where you are planted. Don't wait for **rescue**, hit **restart** & go.

5) God cares more about our composition than our comfort

- a) God takes us thru a refining process . . . end result is gold.
- b) **Zech. 13:9**- *“I will bring that group through the fire and make them pure. I will refine them like silver and purify them like gold. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘These are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’”*
- c) This captivity is not designed to harm you, but make you better.
 - i) The longer you fight it, the longer you delay your happiness.

6) God hasn't given up on you... abandoned you... hate you. It's hope.

- a) Reason for these challenges: God loves, knows there's more ahead.
- b) God has a future for you - *“plans to prosper you... give you hope and a future”*
- c) So **make peace** w/ God. **Stop being angry** ... it's not unfair, it's refining.

7) Justice will come.

- a) King of Babylon triumphs now, moment of truth is coming.
- b) **Jer. 27:** vs 7 *“All nations will serve him, and they will serve his son and his grandson until the time comes for his own nation to fall. Then his nation will serve powerful nations and great kings.”*
- c) What has seemed to be unfair will be made right.
- d) Jer. 29 - ¹³ *You will seek me, and you will find me because you will seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ Yes, ... you will find me, and I will restore you to your land.”*

Jeremiah's letter to the prisoners of King Nebuchadnezzar is also for us.

Song/week - “The Plans I Have For You” – by Marty & Misha Goetz