

The Power of Hope

Jeremiah 29:4-14

PW Emerson – 12/30/2018 – Ten:27 Ministries

Jeremiah 29:4-14

⁴This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” ⁸Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. ⁹They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the LORD.

¹⁰This 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. ¹¹For 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. ¹²Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴I 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.”

God’s chosen people are living in exile in Babylon.

- They had been captured
- Forced to relocate – to an unfamiliar place

- Accept new rules
- Told the get comfortable there, that they would be there for a while.

I've met very few people who like change – I don't think these people were any different.

Illustration – Railroad Brings Dangerous Change

When the railroads were first introduced to the U.S., some folks feared that they'd be the downfall of the nation! Here's an excerpt from a letter to then President Jackson dated January 31, 1829:

As you may know, Mr. President, 'railroad' carriages are pulled at the enormous speed of 15 miles per hour by 'engines' which, in addition to endangering life and limb of passengers, roar and snort their way through the countryside, setting fire to crops, scaring the livestock and frightening women and children. The Almighty certainly never intended that people should travel at such breakneck speed. Martin Van Buren, Governor of New York.

If the person who said that could only see us now.

The people were going through massive change that

- Not only didn't they want it
- They had absolutely no control over.

What do we want when we go through change? ASSURANCE!

Illustration – people on standby in an airport

People in an airport with confirmed tickets are relaxed, reading a book or maybe taking a nap. Those on standby are standing or pacing, near the ticket counter. They are looking around wondering what's happening next. Why? They want assurance about what their future holds.

We see that in the Old Testament when God used Moses to lead the people out of captivity. What do they do? They get to the mountain and make a golden calf. Why? They were nervous and anxious because they didn't know what their future holds.

Many of us have that same problem. We want to know what our future holds. A couple weeks ago I was at a Christmas party and I asked a number of people what I could be praying about for them. I person said that he knows he should let go worrying about the future and put it in God's hands; but he has a tough time doing that.

The exiles did too.

I think that is why God speaks through Jeremiah to give them HOPE. The power of hope is incredible!

This is a letter to the leaders in exile, to reassure the people that God's hasn't abandoned them and that there is hope. He gives them

- Hope to hang their hat on
- Encouragement for living during the exilic period.

Let's take a look at some of what they got.

I God tells them to LIVE IN THE PRESENT

Jeremiah 29:4-7

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

God is saying,

- Quit your moaning about the past
- Don't spend all your time on your hands & knees waiting to win the lottery

Get comfortable living in the present

Picture yourself going on vacationFriday morning your flight will take you away to the best tropical paradise

- Previous Saturday you do all the laundry ...
- Then on Sunday, you do any shopping you need
- Monday you spend all day packing your bags ...
- Tuesday, you drive to the airport ... in case
 - There is a problem with the car
 - Road repair or accidents slow you down
 - There is some kind of security problem at the air port and they have to evacuate the terminal
- And you wait ... for 3 days at the airport

God is telling the people, “Live in the present. Get used to it.”

Think about David (of David and Goliath fame)

- He was anointed King YEARS before he became king
- He didn't start drooling about when he'd be king

He was anointed king ... then he continued living a godly life serving God

In our lives, there are things we hold out hope for ...

- Vacation

- New home
- Better Job
- Wanting God to change ... something
- Health to improve
- Moving closer to a loved one
- Retirement

Don't let hope be paralyzing ... LIVE IN THE PRESENT

II LISTEN FOR THE TRUTH

Jeremiah 29:8-9

Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD.

In late September 1864 Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest was leading his troops north from Decatur, Alabama, toward Nashville. But to make it to Nashville, Forrest would have to defeat the Union army at Athens, Alabama. When the Union commander, Colonel Wallace Campbell, refused to surrender, Forrest asked for a personal meeting, and took Campbell on an inspection of his troops. But each time they left a detachment, the Confederate soldiers simply packed up

and moved to another position, artillery and all. Forrest and Campbell would then arrive at the new encampment and continue to tally up the impressive number of Confederate soldiers and weaponry. By the time they returned to the fort, Campbell was convinced he couldn't win and surrendered unconditionally!

Today in the Word, June 27, 1993.

In this part of the letter in Jeremiah 29, GOD is giving this warning because he **knows** the people **will** face deception. – THAT'S TRUE FOR US ALSO.

The Apostle Paul found the same as he traveled about the Mediterranean planting new churches.

2 Corinthians 11:14

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

But keep in mind what is really happening with the deception. THE TRUTH is a standard – it is defined by God. Just because someone convinces us of a deception doesn't make the ACTUAL TRUTH any less true; it just means we've bought into a lie.

ILLUSTRATION – President Lincoln

Once, when a stubborn disputer seemed unconvinced, Lincoln said, "Well, let's see how many legs has a cow?" "Four, of course," came the reply

disgustedly. "That's right," agreed Lincoln. "Now suppose you call the cow's tail a leg; how many legs would the cow have?" "Why, five, of course," was the confident reply. "Now, that's where you're wrong," said Lincoln.

"Calling a cow's tail a leg doesn't make it a leg."

Bits & Pieces, July, 1991.

In our lives,

- We'll have some difficult moments
- There will be times when God will give us a tough assignment

And people will try to convince us

- It's easier to think of ourselves
- Ethics and Morality will only get in the way – do whatever gets the most money
- Do what feels good

The truth is God's word is ALWAYS God's word. God's love is ALWAYS God's Love. And God will never leave us.

Even when we're in exile or in the valley of the shadow of death, God says,

Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5b

That's the truth

The best thing to remember about hope ...

III THE PLAN IS IN GOD'S HANDS

I know for me, I've had times when God has told me

I WANT YOU TO DO THIS

And once I said, "Yea, but I can make *this* work." And God says

I'M THE ONE WITH THE PLAN.

I just *THINK* I have the plan. God has the real plan.

Isaiah 43:18

Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.

I'm sure the Israelites had that reaction. They **MUST** have said,

- This is how we can get out of here
- This is how we can get our land back
- It may cost X number of lives, but I'm sure we can have a successful revolt!

To try to keep the people from doing something *stupid*,

Jeremiah 29:10-14

This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. 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. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 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."

I am a type-A, Anal, big D on the DiSC, I want to know what's going on! I know I'm not the only one.

My white board – filling in the blank spot – God I need to know what goes in there. And God says, "**NEED?**"

One time, when I was praying, God literally reminded me about the prayer requests he hears and said, "You think you've got the tough side? Hearing all that? That's nothing."

- I used to think I have the plan

GOD is the one with the plan!

Once when leading a men's small group, I asked people for prayer requests. One person said to pray for me in hearing God for that next step and pray for me to be patient until I hear it. - nice!

Ecclesiastes 3

- 1 There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
- 2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
- 3 a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
- 4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
- 5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
- 6 a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
- 7 a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
- 8 a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.
- 9 What does the worker gain from his toil? 10 I have seen the burden God has laid on men. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

God makes it very clear that there is a season and time for everything – and ALL those times and seasons are on God's time!

Mission Mexico Summer 2002

- Sunday night, going over the projects
- Bathroom on the girls house
- “Where are the plans?”
- “The plans are to have it done by the end of the week.”

It became very clear to us very quickly that the plan was in God’s hands. And by following God’s plans, we got much more done.

Life goes so much better when we follow God’s plan – no matter what we’re going through.

CONCLUSION

So, how are we to respond? When we are

- In a foreign land
- Doing work we’d rather not do

Remember that with God there is always hope.

Micah 7:7

But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD,
I wait for God my Savior;

my God will hear me.

ILLUSTRATION – Stay in School – There is HOPE!

From Parade magazine comes the story of self-made millionaire Eugene Land, who greatly changed the lives of a sixth-grade class in East Harlem. Mr. Lang had been asked to speak to a class of 59 sixth-graders. What could he say to inspire these students, most of whom would drop out of school? He wondered how he could get these predominantly black and Puerto Rican children even to look at him. Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak to them from his heart. "Stay in school," he admonished, "and I'll help pay the college tuition for every one of you." At that moment the lives of these students changed. For the first time they had hope. Said one student, "I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling." Nearly 90 percent of that class went on to graduate from high school.

God gives you something to look forward to.

You can accomplish all sorts of things with God

I have hope and something to look forward to – life with God.

How about you?