



Good News Bad News

Jeremiah 29:11-13

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Jer 29:11-12 NLT

11 For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

I remember this verse as one of the 'verses of the week' in Sunday School class growing up.

- This is a verse that I have memorized on more than one occasion.
- It is a popular verse in scripture.
- If you have been a Christian for any length of time then you have read this verse many times and maybe even memorized it yourself.

It is one of the most quoted promises of God in scripture.

- God knows what He thinks about us.
- He thinks of peace and not of evil.
- God has some good plans for your future.

I believe that God has some great plans for your life in the coming year....that is the message of this verse....at least that is the way it is often portrayed to us.

But sadly this verse is often taken out of context.

- My intent tonight is to give you some spiritual insight into the story behind this verse.
- Often times preachers are guilty of using scripture out of context.
- But there is a story behind every scripture that needs to be told.

Let's read together the verse prior to Jeremiah 29:11...

Jeremiah 29:10-11

10 For thus saith the Lord, **That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you,** in causing you to return to this place.

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Now that you have read verse 10, does it change how you feel about verse eleven?

For most of us it does.

- Because now we see that we have to wait seventy years for God to perform this promise.
- Now the promise is predicated upon God's timetable and not ours.

So we read this great promise in Jer 29:11...one of the greatest promises we find in the Bible.....and then we read the bad news in Jer 29:10.....it is going to take seventy years for this good news to happen in our lives.

This is the reality that we don't like to talk about when we quote this wonderful promise.

This is why people don't often quote Jer 29:10 along with verse eleven.

But let's be real today, God often gives promises that are predicated upon conditions.

- Not that we can earn things from God.
- Not that we can earn our salvation.
- But simply that faith without works is dead.

I don't want anybody to leave this place tonight disheartened.

- This is an incredible promise.
- It is not some pie in the sky pipe dream.
- This promise is true.

But it is a promise that isn't always fulfilled right now....often times it is fulfilled later.

And later is usually always later than we want it to happen.

What we think is good about this verse is that we expect the promise to happen right now.....We want God to reveal our future today...if not today then this year.

But that is not the purpose of this verse.

I want to share the purpose of this verse tonight.....I want to share the story behind this verse!

- The purpose of this verse is to give us something to hold onto in the midst of suffering.
- The purpose of this verse is to give us hope in the midst of an uncertain future.
- It is to give us some hope for our lives when everything and everyone else is saying the opposite of what God is saying!

As we go through this story tonight I want you to be reminded that regardless of your present situation, God has not forgotten about you....God has not left you in a situation without hope.

- He is still our God.
- We are still His people.
- And He still has plans for you.

Let's look a little deeper into this story....

Jeremiah was the prophet God sent to Israel during this time....there were other prophets, but many of them were false prophets.

For a period of about twenty three years, Jeremiah had been bringing the word of the Lord to the people of Israel and Judah.

- For the most part, Jeremiah's message was ignored.

- The people did not listen to him.
- They were not obeying the word of God.
- They were living in sin, worshipping idols, and listening to false prophets.

God was trying to warn His people through Jeremiah.

Finally God said, "If you do not listen to Jeremiah, I will send Babylon down to destroy you and take you captive."

- The people did not believe or accept this message from Jeremiah....in part because they did not want to believe it....and in part because there were other prophets preaching a message opposite of Jeremiah.

Let me just stop right here and say this.....belief is a choice.

- We can choose to take God at His word.
- Or we can choose to ignore God and His word.

It is one or the other....there is no in between.

- Judah and Israel both chose to ignore God and ignore the man of God.
- It was a choice....but their choice didn't change the truth.
- What God said would happen, happened.
- Babylon came and destroyed Judah and Israel and took the people captive.
- This captivity would last for seventy years.

There are many people in the world today that choose to believe that God is not going to return and destroy every work of disobedience.

- But that doesn't mean it is not going to happen.
- What you choose to believe doesn't change what truth is.
- In the end, God's Word will stand above all else!

Do you believe that tonight?

So for two and a half decades, Jeremiah preached truth without any results, the people ignored his words.

After giving Israel every opportunity to repent, God allowed Babylon to come in and destroy Judah and Israel and take her captive.

It wasn't until Israel and Judah were taken captive that they began to wake up and listen to the voice of Jeremiah.

- Now that their lives had been taken from them...they were ready to listen.
- Now that they were servants in another land...they were ready to obey.
- Now that their children had been uprooted...they began to listen to Jeremiah.

Shortly after this, another prophet came along by the name of Hananiah.

Hananiah was a false prophet...but the people did not know that at the time.

- Now listen, this is how fickle people are....**Jeremiah's message was** you are facing seventy years of captivity because of your disobedience.
- Now, while in captivity, and along comes Hananiah...**his message was**, "The Lord has spoken to me, and within two years God is going to restore everything Babylon has taken and Babylon will release all of the captives."

Guess who the people believed? Hananiah....why?

Because his message was what the people wanted to hear.

Who wouldn't want to hear that....seventy years of captivity and slavery versus two?

So the people went from ignoring Jeremiah, to believing Jeremiah, then back to ignoring Jeremiah.

Finally Jeremiah confronts this false prophet Hananiah, listen to what he says...

Jer 28:15-17 NLT

15 Then Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah! The Lord has not sent you, but the people believe your lies.

16 Therefore, this is what the Lord says: 'You must die. Your life will end this very year because you have rebelled against the Lord.'"

17 Two months later the prophet Hananiah died.

You have to be careful about what and whom you choose to believe.....the truth of God's word isn't always going to be what you want to hear!

- You will always be able to find a message that sounds good to you....but that doesn't mean it is true.
- Truth often hurts.
- And what is worse is that those messages that sound so good often come when you feel you need to hear them the most.

In other words, when you are in the middle of your darkest hour...and the message is.....your darkest hour is about to be over....it is so easy and comforting to believe that.

When you are fighting temptations and the message is...go ahead there is nothing wrong with that....it is easy to believe.

- Don't you think that Satan knows when to send the false prophets your way?
- Satan knows when to give you a word you want to hear.
- This is how he works.

This is what was happening during the captivity of Israel.

- There was this confrontation between the true prophets and the false prophets.
- The people were receiving two different messages....just like we are today....how many know that there is a false message and there is a true message?

This is where we find Israel when Jeremiah wrote this wonderful scripture that I opened my message with.

- Israel is in the early stages of this oppression.
- They are living as servants in another land.
- Some are without their children.
- Some are without their families.
- The Temple and their way of worship is gone.

They all just want it to be over with....they want to go home.

They are ready to obey God.

So Jeremiah takes this opportunity to write a letter of instruction for all the captives in Babylon.

The letter starts in verse four....

Jer 29:4-13

4 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

God said in the midst of your oppression....I want you to live your life as you would live it if you were still in Jerusalem.

- I want you to build homes.
- Have families.
- Plant crops.
- Seek peace.
- And I want you to pray for the city that you live in.

If you do these things, you will have peace in the midst of your storm!

That is some good word right there!

Israel, since you are going to spend the next seventy years in this land, you might as well do everything you can to obey God.

Because God said even though I won't deliver....I will give you peace!

Can I tell you tonight, I don't know how long you will spend in your current situation...but keep seeking God....keep obeying God....God will give you peace in the midst of your storm.

God will allow you to prosper in the land of the enemy!

Let's keep reading...

8 For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the Lord.

God said, "Listen Israel, there are going to be some false prophets come to you and share some of their dreams with you....don't listen to them even if they tell you what you want to hear...I have not sent them."

Listen church, we have to be strong enough to stand up for truth....even in the midst of the storm.

We must be able to stand for truth....even when that truth is not what we want to hear.

We must take a stand for God's word...it is not just this generation that depends on it, it is the next!

10 For thus saith the Lord, **That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.**

You are going to be here for a while...this is going to last seventy years!

But after seventy years....I will perform my word!

This, then is the context in which we can now read and understand the wonderful scripture I began within

Jeremiah 29:11

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

God has some big plans for your life.

God has a great future planned for you.

It shall be done.

It is going to happen.

You have something to hold on to.

- But there may be some seasons of poverty before you reach prosperity,
- There may be some seasons of what seems hopeless to you before you reach your hopeful future.

This is the reality of the promise.

Sometimes we must wait on our answer.

But what we do have is a promise of deliverance.

And a promise of peace in the midst of our storm.

Deliverance is coming....all you need to focus on is keep pressing on.

- Keep praying.
- Keep seeking peace.
- Keep seeking God.
- Keep coming to church.

You are going to make it.

You are still one of His children.

He still has a plan for your life!