

Settle Down  
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Jeremiah 29:4-14

- We're in Jeremiah 29 beginning in verse 4.
- In this passage is an often quoted verse. You see it in frames, on refrigerator magnets, many could quote it.
- It's Jeremiah 29:11...would someone read it for us?
- When people claim this verse, what kinds of things are going on in their lives?
- We may be familiar with that verse, but have you ever read the CONTEXT in which it was written? Have you read the verses around it to see WHAT ELSE Jeremiah had to say?
- That's what we're studying today.
- This section of Jeremiah is known as A LETTER TO THE EXILES
- What does it mean to be EXILED?
- In this case, what Jeremiah had prophesied over and over had happened: many of the people of Judah had been taken AGAINST THEIR WILL into EXILE in Babylon
- It's unlikely that any of us have to worry about being captured and taken somewhere far off against our will...however, there are times when we feel we're EXILED into a strange land.
- Can you think of some examples of times of CHANGE or CRISIS in life when you might feel like you've been EXILED into a strange land or circumstances?
  - Military service
  - Moving to a new city for a new job
  - Moving a teenager to a new city because the family moved
  - Change due to loss of job or other economic situations
  - A spouse who is suddenly left by the other spouse and has to start over in a new life
  - The death of a spouse or family member
  - A tragic accident that changes a family's life forever
- In this passage, Jeremiah is writing to the people of Judah not only to ENCOURAGE them, but to give them some VERY PRACTICAL ADVICE about how to SURVIVE IN EXILE
- It's good advice for you and me too when we feel we're EXILED into an UNSETTLING SITUATION
- Let's start with verse 4

4 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:

Question: Look at the first few words of verse 4. What do they tell us is the FIRST and MOST IMPORTANT thing to remember when we are in the midst of an UNSETTLING EXPERIENCE? In a crisis the first thing we need to remember is WHO God is!

- Now look at the next few words of verse 4. Who does God say was responsible for these people being taken into exile? HE WAS.
- If God is ALL POWERFUL and IN CONTROL OF EVERYTHING, why wouldn't he SPARE His children from an UNSETTLING LIFE EXPERIENCE?
- Nothing comes into our lives unless it passes through the fingers of God
- He sometimes allows unpleasant changes and UNSETTLING circumstances for His good purposes. We can rest assured it will be for OUR GOOD and HIS GLORY.

Warren Wiersbe says when we are in a seemingly hopeless situation:

*"Accept it from the hand of God and let God have His way."*

*It's normal to feel sadness and loss for a time...but, Wiersbe says:*

*"One of the first steps of turning tragedy into triumph is to accept the situation courageously and put ourselves into the hands of a loving God, who makes no mistakes."*

- Now Jeremiah gets VERY PRACTICAL in the ADVICE he gives to these people who are CAPTIVE in a foreign land...look at verses 5 and 6:

5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.

6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.

Question: If you had to summarize these two verses into one phrase what might it be?

What's he telling them to do? GET ON WITH YOUR LIVES.

After a TEMPORARY period of grieving, GET ON WITH YOUR LIVES

Look at verse 6. What does he tell them to do?

- Why was it important for them to multiply and not decrease?

They were the FUTURE of the nation of Israel.

Even in captivity they needed to MULTIPLY into an even stronger NATION

In verse 7 Jeremiah gives advice that might seem COUNTERINTUITIVE

7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

- What? These rotten scoundrels have captured us and taken us away with only what we can carry and YOU WANT US TO PRAY FOR THEM? You want us to help this nation THRIVE?
- Look at the last few words of verse 7. Why would it benefit them to SEEK THE WELFARE of this place? If it prospers, THEY prosper
- Good counsel...but hard to do isn't it? The command to "pray for your enemies" is one of the hardest things we are called to do.
- Back to Jeremiah's letter...
- Do you wonder why Jeremiah was being so FORCEFUL in telling these people to GET ON WITH THEIR LIVES? Because they had been getting some BAD ADVICE
- Look at verses 8 and 9:

8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream,

9 for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD.

- When we're in a CRISIS in our lives we get a lot of advice!
- And a lot of it is with good intentions...people want to encourage us and help us.
- But some of it is just BAD ADVICE
- Question: If you go to a doctor for a problem do you want that doctor to tell you what you WANT TO HEAR or what you NEED to hear?
- You see, among the people in exile were FALSE PROPHETS and DIVINERS (fortune tellers) who were telling the people...don't unpack much, we're only going to be here for a short while...maybe two years
- Jeremiah knew if they held on to false hopes they would lose valuable time in getting on with life
- When we're in a crisis it's tempting to grab on to FALSE HOPES and EASY FIXES
- It's like the person in a financial crisis who takes the money they have left and goes to Vegas to try to multiply it into what they need
- When we're in a crisis we need to put our trust in God and not in false hopes and easy fixes
- And a word to those of us who are trying to encourage someone who is in a CRISIS, don't try to make them feel better by telling them it will be EASY...just encourage them to TRUST GOD
- Jeremiah gives these people the TRUTH...look at verse 10:

10 "For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

- Seventy years? God, you've gotta be kidding! We're gonna be stuck here for seventy years?
- Then we come to that famous verse we talked about...verse 11
- God through Jeremiah reminds them (and us) He has a BIGGER PICTURE for our life

11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

- It's as if God is saying: "I have BIGGER PLANS for you than you can imagine!"
- "I am planning to use the land of Judah as my chosen nation for a very important part of my plan."
- Remember, one of the "names" for Jesus, for the Messiah, is the "LION OF \_\_\_\_\_ (Judah).
- God was going to use these people to bring forth the Messiah they had been promised
- But before he could use them He had to BREAK THEM
- He had to PURGE THEM of the idol worship they had fallen into
- He gave them all those warnings back home, but finally he had to SHAKE THEIR WORLD UP to get through to them

Unfortunately, we're so HARD HEADED that sometimes God has to ROCK OUR WORLD to GET OUR ATTENTION so he can USE us

One of the writers of the Broadman and Holman Commentary says:

*They did undergo a transformation during the exile and learned valuable lessons. One of my college professors listed what he called three important results of the exile—(1) a thorough purging of idolatrous rituals in worship and acceptance of monotheism, (2) the rise of synagogues as teaching institutions, and (3) a deeper longing for their Messiah. This does not mean the Jews were without error after that, but they did learn those valuable lessons.*

- Now that he had their attention, God through Jeremiah told them how His plan would work:

12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear 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 I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

- What often happens when God gets us into what seems like a HOPELESS situation? We call on Him like never before!
- Unfortunately, when things are going pretty well, we might do well to remember to say the blessing before we eat.
- But what happens when we're DESPERATE?
- I love the lyrics of the Michael W. Smith song BREATHE:
- "I'm DESPERATE FOR YOU...I'm LOST WITHOUT YOU!"
- When we get DESPERATE enough for God to seek him with ALL OUR HEART we will find Him!

Psalm 42 says it well:

Psalm 42

1 As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, my God. (Imagine being parched, thirsty in a desert)

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God? (Desperation!)

3 My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while people say to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?” (Looks to me like your God has forsaken you!)

Put your hope in God, (What we KNOW to do)  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God. (What comes from DESPERATELY SEEKING Him)

So, What's The TAKEAWAY?

- I hope you'll BOOKMARK Jeremiah 29:4-14 for these important TRUTHS when we're thrown into one of life's UNSETTLING EXPERIENCES:
- Nothing comes into our lives that didn't come through God's hands...He uses what seem like HOPELESS circumstances for OUR GOOD and HIS GLORY
- When we're in these circumstances we need to TRUST GOD and ask Him for the GRACE to CARRY ON WITH LIFE
- We need to CLAIM Jeremiah 29:11 knowing His plans are always for our good
- We need to use Jeremiah 29:12-14 as a MODEL of how we are to DESPERATELY SEEK God in times of CRISIS

One of my favorite quotes from Charles Spurgeon:

*"God is too good to be unkind.*

*He is too wise to be confused.*

*If I cannot trace His hand, I can always trust His heart."*