

It's Not Over Until It's Over; And It's Not Over Yet

It is at this time of the year as students contemplate graduation, whether it is from kindergarten, middle school, high school or college, that they will be reminded of Jeremiah 29:11 which says, "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." Should you compare the modern translations, almost all of them will translate the last of this verse, "...to give you hope and a future." Before the English translation of the King James in 1611, there were previous older English translations that give a keen insight to the ending of Jeremiah 29:11. Keep in mind, I am going to try to stay with the spelling of the Old English, but it will not be difficult to discern the words. The Coverdale Bible of 1535 reads, "... (which I geue you all redie) & that ye might haue hope agayne." The Bishop's Bible of 1568, "...to geue you an ende as you wishe and hope to haue." Then finally the Geneva Bible of 1587 "...to giue you an ende, and your hope." For the most part, the modern translations leave out the concept of something coming to the end before the expectation or hope is fulfilled. I love the understanding of our spiritual ancestors who were encouraging God's people to hope again with an end of our trials in sight. I think it is precious to note that the Pilgrims came to America clutching the Geneva Bible. They were looking forward to a happy ending of their oppression from governments of man, which was voiced by the children of these Puritans in the words ratified in the first hours of the summer of 1788: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

To appreciate the promise given in Jeremiah 29:11, a backstory is required. In Jeremiah 25, God gives Jeremiah the message that because of Judah's continual sins and refusal to repent, seventy years of captivity is prophesied. Jeremiah reminded them that God gave them time to repent. Jeremiah 25:4: "And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear." Jeremiah also informed them that this was something that the people have brought upon themselves. Jeremiah 25:7: "Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt." As we progress to Jeremiah 26, we find the leaders of Judah are prepared to kill Jeremiah for prophesying of judgment. Jeremiah 26:11: "Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears." As we come to Jeremiah 27, God commands Jeremiah to become a visual messenger of His message. Jeremiah 27:2: "Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck." This message was also shared with surrounding kingdoms: Jeremiah 27:5, 6: "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it

unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him." God declares that as ruthless as Nebuchadnezzar was, he was still God's servant fulfilling His will. And at no time before captivity, during captivity or after captivity is God ever out of control. In Jeremiah 28, Hananiah, the son of Azur and a respected prophet, desires to give Judah an abridgement of Jeremiah's prophecy, that it doesn't have to be that long (seventy years) and does the unspeakable. Jeremiah 28:10: "Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it." Jeremiah's response to the lying prophecy of Hananiah: Jeremiah 28:13: "Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron." A lesson is given that when we rebel against God's chastening, it only gets worse.

With this previous information, we now move into the chapter of our text and the points of our message:

1. ACCEPT YOUR DISCIPLINE.

Jeremiah 29:4: "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."

Please note the words, "...I have caused...." If God has caused it, we should abide under His hand of chastisement. Hebrews 12:6, 7: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

While meditating over this passage, I thought about the dangerous "rip current," often incorrectly called "rip tide." When a swimmer enters a rip current, it starts to carry them offshore. The swimmer can exit the rip current by swimming at right angles to the flow, parallel to the shore, or by simply treading water or floating until carried beyond the breakage of waves. However, drowning may occur when swimmers exhaust themselves by trying unsuccessfully to swim directly against the flow.

2. THE ABUNDANT LIFE IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

Jeremiah 29:5, 6. Notice these important words in these two verses: "Build, dwell, plant, eat, take, begat, bear...that ye may be increased there, and not diminished." Don't give up in pursuit of God; no matter what the circumstances. Don't quit your jobs. Keep strong in your family life. God is not through with you or your loved ones for whom you pray. As the plague of darkness covered the land of Egypt under the judgement of God, it is worthwhile to note these inspired words found in Exodus 10:22b, 23: "...and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings."

3. SOW PEACE, REAP TRANQUILITY.

Jeremiah 29:7: "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." Outside of Christ, according to Ephesians 2:12, we all are aliens. Through Christ, we have peace with God: Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Others need that precious peace. II Corinthians 5:18: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."

We should pray for our community, our state and country to have the peace that only comes through Christ (Luke 10:2) and work to that end (John 9:4).

4. PRAY, WORSHIP AND SERVE GOD WITH HIS THOUGHTS IN MIND.

Jeremiah 29:11.

Luke 21:19: "In your patience possess ye your souls." Hebrews 10:36: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." James 5:11: "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

5. THERE IS GREAT REWARD FOR THE SERIOUS SEEKER.

Jeremiah 29:13: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

A. This promise is resplendent throughout the Bible. Deuteronomy 4:29.

B. Be preoccupied with God, not with what you get from God. Jeremiah 45:5; Amos 5:8; Psalm 27:8.

C. All things fall into place when God is in His rightful place. Matthew 6:33.

Conclusion:

It was during the 1973 pennant race and the New York Mets were in last place. It was at this moment in time that Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over till it's over." And he went on to manage the team to win the division title. This never-say-die attitude, to put it in baseball terms, knocks a home run even after a series of strikeouts.

Even after seventy years of captivity and dispersion for thousands of years, Israel is back in the land fulfilling Jeremiah 29:11. This is also applicable for the Church, for Jesus said, "...upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18b). Let's claim it for our families and for us individually (Proverbs 9:1; Proverbs 24:16a).

-Pastor Pope-