

Perseverance in the Midst of Babylon, Faithfulness in Captivity

by Dean Taylor

This sermon emphasizes the theme of perseverance in the midst of challenges, drawing insights from Jeremiah chapter 29. It highlights the importance of trusting in God's promises, seeking Him with all our hearts, and living in holiness and fear of God. The speaker encourages the audience to continue walking in faith, even when faced with difficulties, and to hold on to the hope and future God has promised.

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11, Jeremiah 29:12, Jeremiah 29:14, Jeremiah 29:11, Jeremiah 29:13, Jeremiah 29:14

Topics: "Perseverance", "Trusting God's Promises"

Description

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Transcript

Welcome, everyone. It's great to see everybody. Today I'm going to take a little break from my series on 1 Corinthians.

I had a final message to give to the chapel. And I was just really pondering on your thinking as we come up towards the end of the year and what is the kind of thing that some, you know, students there would be maybe in a certificate program, a one-year program that I might not see. And so, at least for a while.

And so, I really pondered the idea of the blessing of God and an exhortation that would go along with that. And the Lord, I think, just put on my heart a passage or a section in Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 29, verse 5. And the, or starting at verse 5, but the name of the message that I'd like to focus this exhortation and promise is perseverance in the midst of Babylon. Name of the message would be perseverance in the midst of Babylon, faithfulness in captivity.

So, let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we come to you in the name of Jesus Christ this evening. And dear God, we pray for your grace.

We pray that your very presence would be here. And Lord, we think of the people of God and we say, Lord, spare thy people. Give not your heritage to reproach that the heathen would say, where is their

God? And so, Lord, we come to you and we need your grace to live faithful lives.

We need your grace and your power and your spirit, dear God, to persevere while we are in this Babylon that we live in. You've called us not to dwell in little hiding places, but to go into all the world and to spread your kingdom and to tell people about you, to make your name great. But in the midst of that, we have to persevere and live lives and those things.

And so, God, we need grace for that. It's hard. So, Lord, I pray that you would have this message, this warning that you gave to Israel from the prophet Jeremiah, that you spoke through him, that this would also have a lasting word for us today.

God, please speak to us through this word. Let my words fall to the ground. You accomplish the purpose that you want for your word, and you be glorified in Jesus' name.

Amen. You know, probably one of the most beautiful promises in the Bible that you see, like on posters or, you know, websites or things, is this beautiful verse in Jeremiah 29, 11. And it's just a great verse.

Anytime I'm depressed or Tonya's depressed or feeling, this is a common passage that I go to, to just sort of encourage myself that, yeah, I got to stop thinking bad about myself. Yeah, I got to stop being depressed. And this passage is great for that.

It's Jeremiah 29, 11. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Isn't that just a great verse? I mean, anytime you get down, take up Jeremiah 29, 11.

I love this passage. And it's so easy to get down and in our circumstances. But as we unpack this passage of where it's tucked in, in Jeremiah, it gets even better.

Because what it is, it's a promise that God is not thinking evil of us. He doesn't have our bad interests. He wants our future to be positive.

But it's a promise in the midst of a Babylonian captivity. He's promising it. I'm with you through this.

This is tough. This is going to be bad. This is going to be really bad.

But I'm with you. And that's what comes out of it. So here's the context.

Let's back it up now to verse five. So the false prophets, we'll touch on that a little bit later. But the false prophets are warning, this is just going to be a little thing.

Don't worry about it. And Jeremiah prophet said, no, it's going to be bad. It's going to be really bad.

And you need to persevere. You've got to persevere. So Jeremiah 29, 5, it said, build houses and dwell in them.

Plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands so that they may bear sons and daughters, that you may be increased there and not diminish. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive and pray to the Lord for it.

For in its peace, you will have peace. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Do not let your prophets or your diviners who are in your midst deceive you nor listen to your dreams, which you cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to you in my name.

I have not sent them, saith the Lord. For thus saith the Lord, after 70 years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word toward you and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord.

Thoughts of peace and not evil to give you a future and a hope. If we all know and are good Bible students, Jeremiah was a priest and God used him to speak to some of these particular problems that was happening. And at the beginning of Jeremiah, it starts off with Jeremiah 1.9. Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

God's speaking through Jeremiah. See, I have this day set you over the nation and over the kingdoms to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant. So we got a major, you know, change, both to destroy, but also to build, to get the bad out, but also to bring things up.

And then throughout Jeremiah, there's like these little poems and stories and things and it comes in as a little collection. In chapter 36, we see him taking Baruch and saying, okay, put this all together. It's interesting, the Bible project calls it an anthology, a group of poems or things that are brought together.

And I like that idea. Like it was a collection of stories and things. You know that a few years ago, as I think of the life of Jeremiah, I think of your lives.

And, you know, years ago, Tonya and I put together the book of our story of getting out of the army and it was amazing putting that together. I think the Lord blessed us in that and it's done much better than we ever thought it would do. But it was interesting what that does.

So even though that was just the beginning and there's lots of stuff after that, you know, what it does to you by writing something down like that, it makes you think like if someone's reading your story, what do you, if you're reading the story of your life, what do you just hope that that guy is going to do on the next page? What is he going to do on the next page? So think of your life. Think of writing the story of your life. What do you want the next page to say? And I think that that's an interesting way to look at this anthology, as the title project calls it, or these things.

It's a collection of who you are. As we head up to 29, the chapter we were on and passage, the Jeremiah is just full of these little chock full of these poems and things. And I get these little, I have an email, for years I've got the, ever since I heard about the Moravian watchwords, you know, they would, the Moravians had this habit, they would just randomly come up with a scripture and they were really big into the lot and all that.

And so now to this day, apparently they're still put, I get emails of just these verses. They're usually completely out of context. So you just get them.

And so sometimes I forget the context. And there was one that I got, I came across. I think it was from that.

And it was an interesting passage from Jeremiah 12, 8. This again, we're just kind of going through that anthology as we make it to our passage. And it said this passage and I took it wrong. It said, my heritage

is to me like a lion in the forest.

It cries out against me. Therefore I have hated it. When I first read that, I was thinking it was Jeremiah.

I forgot that it was God that was speaking. I thought it was Jeremiah that was speaking. And I thought about Jeremiah and his, you know, background or his people and all that type of a thing.

And I thought of myself and just, I don't know, you sometimes feel like your background or your baggage of life. I think of Isaiah in Isaiah 6. I dwell to people of unclean lips. And I, you know, he himself is like his very nature.

And I felt this kind of thing. Like sometimes you feel like your entire background and everything is just drawing you down. But when I looked at the context, it's much worse than that.

It's actually God saying that. It's God saying that about his people. That the people of God who are meant to be pressing on and following and doing the things and being that possession, as you talked about Brother David, that sweet treasure in Jim.

I love that. That they're actually coming out against him. And I thought, well, it's so much worse than even the way that I was reading it.

And what's interesting also is that in that passage, I went and looked up the context of it. And the whole thing started from a complaint from the people. And I felt myself in this.

It starts with a complaint. So in the passage of Jeremiah 12, 8, my heritage is to me like a line in the forest. Back it up to the one.

It starts off Jeremiah or speaking for the people, whatever. He says, why does the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? You have planted them. Yes, they have taken root.

They grow. Yes, they bear fruit. And you are near in their mouth, but far in their mind.

And this sort of jealousy that kind of raises up in him. I think the same thing that one of my most challenging passages that I come to frequently is in Psalm 73, where David is doing this. And he says in Psalm 73, behold, these are the ungodly who are always at ease.

They increase in riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocence. In other words, I've done all this stuff.

And what's it helping me when that guy walking down the street has all this and I don't. It's interesting taking this complaint, the rebuke that God packs in here, getting to that other rebuke God answers. And it's an answer, a challenge of perseverance, which is the theme of this message.

Perseverance. In the midst of Babylon. And he says this.

So remember, the rebuke is why do they get to do this? And, you know, what's wrong with me? And he says this in verse five. If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with the horses, the cavalry? So if you, in other words, if you're falling, you know, with the little easy steps in life, how are you ever going to contend with the horses? And if in the land of peace in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan? For even your

brothers, the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you. Yes, they have called a multitude after you.

And so it's interesting. I look at this and it's like, I mean, if you can't make it in the church, if church life is so hard, this is the blessed place, you know, and that you're offended or things aren't going or this, and then how are you ever going to accomplish these things that I'm wanting to call you to? If you can't get along with the footmen, how are you going to take the cavalry? If you can't dwell in this sweet place, then how are you going to go in the floodplain of Jordan? If even your brothers and sisters of your own household, how are you going to do this? He rebukes them. And that's when he says in verse seven, I have forsaken my house.

I've left my heritage. I've given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. My heritage is to me like a lion in the forest.

It cries out against me. Therefore, I have hated it. My heritage, he says, to me is like a speckled vulture.

Ouch. The vultures all around are against her. Come, assemble all the beast of the field and bring them to devour.

It's very strong. And then he gets really personal. He gets really personal with leadership positions in our life.

And I'll give you a warning. Most of this is a very young congregation. You're all get, all of you are going to be fathers, mothers, leaders in the church, pastors.

And the responsibilities that God is expecting for the children of God to have, for our children, for our churches, our places of influence is very real. And he expects a lot from us. He goes on to say in verse 10.

Again, this is in 1210. Many rulers have destroyed my vineyard. They have trodden my portion underfoot.

They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it a desolate, desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate because no one takes it to heart.

You know, I think one of the most dangerous things that I've seen in my own life is when I get really complacent, when I get cynical, when I get, you know, tired and when I get, and this whole thing on perseverance is in the context of perseverance is you're not taking things to heart. You're not caring. And this in a leadership role is a lot even worse.

When you have children, when you have places of influence, when you have things, he says, no one's taking any of this to heart. You don't care. You're just ignoring that all this stuff is happening and all these things and you don't even care.

Verse 10, many rulers have destroyed my vineyard. And another place, he says in Jeremiah 23, woe to the shepherds, verse one, woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord. Therefore, thus the Lord say to Israel against the shepherds who feed my people, you have scattered my flock, driven them away and not attended to them.

You know, I'll tell you, it's really easy when in our life with troubling people, difficult situations your children are going through, people that I don't know, whatever, that there's a really big, easy thing to just kind of push them out, get away from it. It embarrasses me. It humiliates me and get rid of it.

You have scattered my flock and driven them away and not attended to them. And this idea that God is wanting us, this is part of that is a severe calling that he's saying here. He said, behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doing, saith the Lord.

But I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their fold and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds unto them who will feed them and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking, saith the Lord. So this calling as fathers, as leaders, as ministers, as shepherds, as mothers, this calling is a very important one.

Jeremiah frequently all through his book here, he's comparing idolatry, like, you know, worshiping false gods with adultery. He's comparing things of calling this false worship like a lover. It's a lover who has betrayed him.

And it's like he's getting personal over these things. It's not just breaking a law or something. It's like God is letting us know deep inside that this is like the pain of adultery of a husband.

And it's serious. And he calls out in memory of this relationship. And I encourage you, think of our relationships with Jesus Christ and think of that love relationship.

And that is the kind of thing that's supposed to motivate us to holiness. At the very beginning of Jeremiah and Jeremiah 2-2, he says, I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal. When you went after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown, Israel was a holiness to the Lord.

The first fruit of his increase. Israel was a holiness to the Lord. And when that love was there, when that sweetness was there, you know, this idea of a holiness to the Lord.

I love at the end of Zachariah, where it talks about this idea of things being holiness to the Lord. And the idea there is not a focus on what the things we can't do, but how we can anoint and be special and bring this life and a holiness, which means special, which means separated, which means a precious treasure, as you've talked about, to the Lord. And what can I do for that? Paul lets us know all things are lawful.

Everything's lawful, but not all things edify. And your definition of holiness is how you define that edify part. If you find yourself asking the question, what's wrong with this? What's wrong with that movie? I mean, what's wrong with that song? What's wrong with these things? What's wrong with this clothes? What's wrong with this thought? What's wrong with these attitudes? I mean, is it a sin? Is that a sin? Is this a sin? Is that a sin? I'm telling you, if that's the way your thinking is going, it's not a holy life.

It's not. Because it's by definition, you get it. It's not about what you're not doing.

The whole idea of holiness is what you're consecrating, what you're making special. It's how you in your life and in your attitude and your music and your dreams and your thinking and your clothes and your eating and your, I don't know, everything, your breathing, it's everything that you can offer as a sweet smelling sacrifice to the Lord. Spending a life, what's wrong with that? What's wrong with this? What's wrong with that? It's just looking at, that's not holiness.

You can't get there by there. And so we don't want to end up asking the wrong questions when we're thinking about this and not walking in a legalistic way, but just as this sweet betrothal he talks about when we came after him in the wilderness, praise God. I'll do anything for you, Lord.

What do you want to do? Can you remember those days? I remember them. What do you want, Lord? What's the Bible say about this? I'll do it. What's the Bible say about that? I love it.

And what else can I find? I might find something else in there. I get excited about it. That's holiness.

And it's exciting. It's living. And then he says this, right after that in chapter two.

This is, I'm using kind of an anthology as the Bible Project calls it, looking at this as we get our way back to 29. And this idea that it used to be this way in 2.11, he says, remember that's the way it was. But my people have changed their glory for that which doesn't profit.

You had glory, the Shekinah glory of God. You had the sweetness and you're trading that for something that doesn't even do you any good. And he says, be astonished, verse 12.

Oh, heavens, and be horribly afraid. That's quite a word. Horribly afraid, be very desolate, saith the Lord.

And then he brings it down to some specifics. Verse 13, for my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

You know, this idea is really powerful. These two things, these two evils. So you've forsaken truly who God is.

And it says the fountain of living waters. And I think if you think of how we can kind of trade this love relationship with Jesus Christ with maybe a bunch of rules or a bunch of regulations, a legalistic understanding of God. And as you do that kind of a thing, then this becomes losing it.

Or if somehow you don't have this living water in you and that you're looking at what's not a sin, it's not a sin, it's not this. And you're looking at life and a legal thing and not as this sweet holiness to the Lord, that's losing the living water. So have you got that? Have you returned to the living water and have that, as Jesus said, will flow from you? The next thing is he said that you've made for yourself, you've carved out for yourself cisterns that don't hold water.

So let me ask you, many of us have had some pretty big testimonies. Come from things or some of you come from very awkward religious settings. Some of us have come from political settings.

Some of us come from all different things. And now we've created for ourself a cistern. Does your cistern hold water? Does your system hold water? Does your life hold water? Or does it have holes in it? Can it hold that living water? Can it hold the holiness of God? Or is it something that just keeps leaking out everywhere? Just be honest with yourself because two sins that they've done, you've left the living water and you can't hold the living water.

And so if you've come to that living water, do you have something in place in your life that's gonna be a way for you to hold that? I've given you maybe this analogy before, but I love this story. It was a novel by Alan Patton. I think I've given this, so bear with me.

I think it suits with this message here. And Alan Patton, Cry Beloved Country. And they were, the whole idea was dealing with South Africa apartheid.

And the scene was there were two black ministers that were there from the Anglican church or something like that. And their children of the church were getting into drugs and getting in. And one scene had been where they killed a white plantation owner.

And now this young man was going to jail. And it was terrible story. These two broken, dear, old bishops are meeting together and just distraught over what's happened to their next generation.

And I'll never forget the scene. And he says, the one is talking to the other. And the one, the bishop says, it's not in my heart to hate the white man.

It's not. There was this, they were mad because these people are getting thrown in jail and all these things. It's not in my heart to hate the white man.

He says, the white man brought the gospel to my people. I'm thankful for this. But this is in my heart.

And I have to say it, that it suited the white man to break the tribe. But it has not suited him to build something in its place. And this is the truth for me.

And this is why our people are robbing and stealing and these types of things. So I ask you, we have many beautiful testimonies of coming and having salvation in Jesus Christ. We've broken a lot of those things that we've come from and all those different things.

But do we have something that can stand? Perseverance in Babylon. Can you make it? Does your cistern hold water? Because he wants to pour this living water to you. Does it hold water? All right.

So the context back into our Jeremiah 29 is captivity. And he's saying, it's going to be bad. It's going to be really bad.

And Hananiah was a false prophet. He said, no, no, no, that's ridiculous. It's going to be a couple of years.

Don't worry about this. We're going to just stay here and we'll have patience. And Jeremiah wanted him to know, no.

And there's two things that he really wanted to know. It's going to be bad, but I'm going to be with you. And it's very much like Jesus, you know, when he said, I will send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.

When you just think about that analogy, you're like, that's not very encouraging. You know, I mean, that's not something you think of a positive speaker that's going to say to his coaches or something. I mean, a coach is going to say it or something.

You know, I'm send you out as a sheep in the midst of wolves. And when you start thinking about that's going to turn out, it ain't going to be too good. It's not going to be too good, but I'll be with you.

Jesus was saying, he said, go into all the world and preach the gospel. We know the story of every single one of those apostles save John had terrible deaths, but I'll be with you. And this is the kind of thing.

So Jeremiah 29, build houses, dwell in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit, take wives and beget sons and daughters. And he goes on and talks about this. I think of this idea of just a clear understanding of our calling, but yet knowing we're in the right place.

In World War II, General Patton had an issue when they were coming to the Battle of the Bulge. And with General Patton, the supply line was one of the things that of course, the Germans would just bomb the supply line and then so who wants to be a trucker in the Battle of the Bulge? I'd rather be behind a tree and be an infantry guy, but being a trucker, no. So General Patton came to these truck line of truckers and he said, here's the way it's going to be.

Get into the truck, drive down the road until somebody blows you up. And he did it and it worked, but there was something relieving and knowing what your place is to be. And they went and they won the battle in this kind of a way.

Go out as sheep in the midst of wolves is a call to die. It's a call to die, but he wants us to be strong. He tells us we have resurrection.

He tells us that we will never die. So these places that he's leading, that the things that he's telling us to do will never die. My favorite all time, all time favorite speech, I think.

My all time favorite history speech is Napoleon addressing his troops in 1796. He had taken France, he had taken Austria, he had taken now, he's going trying to go over and take Northern Italy. He'd take Northern Italy and Piedmont and the troops had been through a lot.

I mean, he'd taken the whole nation of France, he'd taken Austria, now we're in Italy. And Italy was a little more difficult because people were a little more happy with their kings and their situations and so they were there. And Napoleon had to get the troops to just persevere us, keep going.

My favorite speech is kind of like Patton's short speech. He said this, I've given this to you before, but in the context of this Jeremiah passage, I want you just to ponder this. As our captain says to us, remember, he's calling us to persevere in Babylon.

So he said, imagine Napoleon and all his Napoleon stuff with his troops and he says, in a fourth night, that's two weeks, you have won six victories, taken 21 standards, 55 pieces of artillery, several strong positions and conquered the richest part of Piedmont, Northern Italy. You have captured 15,000 prisoners and killed or wounded more than 10,000 men. You have won battles without cannons, crossed rivers without bridges, made forced marches without shoes, camped without brandy and often without bread, soldiers of Liberty, only Republican troops could have endured what you have endured.

Soldiers, you have our thanks. The grateful Patre, the nation will owe its prosperity to you. Two armies, which but recently attacked you with audacity are fleeing before you in terror.

Let me ask you, have you won some victories in Christ? I mean big ones. Have you know that you've had that victory and you know habits in your life that were defeated and things that were accomplished and baggages that you've given up. Two armies that were recently attacked you with audacity are fleeing before you in terror.

The wicked men who laughed at your misery and rejoiced at the thought of the triumphs of your enemies are confounded and trembling. I love the idea of Satan being confounded and trembling when we break the bonds of pornography or we break the bonds of complacency or we break the bonds of these things, amen. But then he says this, I love this.

But soldiers, as of yet you have done nothing compared with what remains to be done. It's a very sobering call. They're out there, they're in Northern Italy, they're thousands or hundreds of miles from home and he said undoubtedly the greatest obstacles have been overcome, but you still have battles to fight, cities to capture, rivers to cross.

Is there one among you whose courage is abating? No, all of you are consumed with the desire to extend the glory of the French people. All of you long to humiliate those arrogant kings who dare to contemplate placing you in fetters. All of you desire to dictate a glorious peace, one which will identify the patriae, long the immense sacrifices it has made.

All of you wish to be able to say with pride as you return to your villages, I was in the victorious army that took Italy. You know, we have these fights, we have these battles, spiritual battles. It's so easy though to give up, it really is.

And I'll tell you, it continually gets harder, but we have the grace of God. We have this promise that he's gonna pack into Jeremiah 29 here. You're in Babylon.

You're supposed to minister there in Babylon. You're supposed to be active and keep going. I'll be with you, but it is tough.

Did you, how many of you have all read The Pilgrim's Progress? Most of y'all, okay. Does anybody remember what is the last and hardest trap in Pilgrim's Progress before they crossed the river? The last and most difficult trap of it. Does anybody remember? The Enchanted Grounds.

Thank you, good. The Enchanted Ground. Oh, in the Enchanted Ground was worse than the Vanity Fair, worse than the Pride Place, worse than all those, the Enchanted Ground that everything in you as you've been walking through your life and going through these things and marching on, everything in you just drags out to just go to sleep right before you cross the river.

Just give up. And I'm telling you, at 56, it doesn't get any better. It gets worse.

Dean, isn't it time to go fishing? Shouldn't you get one of those mobile, you know, those little, you know, those little, what do you call them? Winnebago's or whatever, you know. You could spiritualize it. You know, you could have like a fishing ministry or something, I don't know.

I don't know, but the tendency is for us at all times in our life to do that. It happens in many ways. You're discouraged.

You didn't do as well as you thought you would in school. It didn't go well with a relationship. A job didn't happen.

There's frustrations that, there's problem in the church. There's different things. And everything in you just says, you know, it's time to just kind of relax and feed myself a little more.

And I'm telling you, I'm going to confess to you publicly. I fight this all the time. I do.

I'm like, I just want to stop. I, but I see that's a little, in the cartoons, you see the little smell coming up with the flowers trying to enchant me. And I realize, okay, I got to keep marching.

I got to keep going. I got to keep, I got to keep fighting. I got to keep this going.

You know, we are living in a day and age, and I know everybody says it, but seriously, this day and age has got to be the most, you have so much opportunities for the church. Just in my lifetime, when I first moved to our family to Pennsylvania, this is, I don't know, 15 years ago or so, maybe a little bit more, something like that, 20 years ago. Okay, sorry.

Ouch. Okay. So when I was there, I remember Daniel Kiniston, who was here preaching.

I remember he was just recently in Africa or not too long in Africa. He was already there. But we had talked about buying a satellite phone.

And we were going to take a collection because it was \$10,000 to get a satellite phone. And then Daniel had to climb up over to a hill and go up to this mountain. And if there was trouble that was happening in the church or a pastoral problem, and he needed to call for advice, he would climb up to this hill with this \$10,000 satellite phone or something like that, and then call us to tell the pastor and get advice or something.

Nowadays, I send him a WhatsApp video. And that's the kind of opportunities we have. I mean, communication.

I mean, and the military communication was key. Just figuring out how to run a battle and how to do things, to be able to communicate at the end of the world, at the touch of a phone call. Within 48 hours, we can get to the main cities.

24 hours, we could practically get to the main cities of any place on the earth for not that much money. For really not that much money. Children could mow the grass and have enough money to go to Hong Kong within a couple weeks.

That's the kind of world we're living in now. The opportunities are incredible. We don't have... All right, maybe a month.

Okay. These guys are good though. All right.

So the tendency for us to give up, the tendency is there. Jeremiah 29, back to our text. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, do not let your prophets and your diviners, and watch where he goes with this.

Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. That's an interesting twist, isn't it? Don't listen to the false prophets and get out of your own head. So the way I read that is that, yeah, you know, Dean, I'd really love to... I got this kind of vision.

I'm gonna do this. I'm gonna do that and the other. And it's just, you know, there's so many things that are dragging us down to compromise, even your own dreams and your own things that are in your head.

Let the word of God direct you. Let the word of God give us a life to live. I tell you, one of my favorite little works by A.W. Tozer, the title alone is a sermon.

Here it is. The title alone is a sermon. Here it is.

The world, playground or battlefield. That's it. We're in Babylon.

Tozer said, the world, the name of the message, the world, colon, playground or battlefield. It's like that sentence alone just kind of puts things together about how we live in Babylon as we're here. How we address things.

You know, John D. Martin talks about the, what was the name of that cruise liner? They took a military ship and in this military ship, I forgot the statistics of this. I should have looked it up. But it's like it took hundreds or maybe thousands of different soldiers that could be in this ship.

And then after the war was over, they repurposed this for a cruise liner. And then as they repurpose this for a cruise liner, what usually fit, I don't know, let's say 2000 people and was able to cross the seas take cities and countries or whatever. Now suited like, I don't know, 200 people with shuffleboards and swimming pools and this kind of a thing.

This world, playground or battlefield. All things are lawful, everyone. We're not gonna sit here and nitpick thing.

All things are lawful, but do you have that holiness to the Lord? I'm gonna consecrate this little square, but you don't have to. I know, that's what makes it even more special. I'm gonna consecrate this time, but you don't have to.

I know, that's what makes it more holy. You don't have to, I'm gonna give up watching this, but you don't have to, that's okay. I know, but that's what makes it even better.

Because I'm gonna take it and make it holiness to the Lord. Holiness to the Lord. And then in verse 10, he gives us the promise.

You know, it's so amazing that we worship a God who is faithful to his promises. Where all the promises in God are what? Yes and amen. Yes and amen, all the promises.

2910, for thus saith the Lord, after 70 years or after whatever he has accomplished that he wants to do, are completed in Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you. That's his promise. And cause you to return to this place.

And here's our verse. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord. Thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

It's hard, but he wants to give you a future. They're good things. This is good.

It's hard, I know, and it hurts. I know it's like sheep before the midst of wolves. But I'm telling you, you gotta understand that my heart and my desire is to give you these good things.

The context is captivity. And it's going to be bad. But then that promise.

And then he goes on, and he goes on now, just starts flowing with promises now. At verse 12. Then you will call upon me.

If you're gonna do all this, then you will call upon me and go and pray to me. And I will listen to you. I tell you, an open heaven, there's nothing like.

And I tell you that if, who shall ascend into the house of the Lord, the Bible says, he who has a clean hand and a pure heart. And there's so many times that I feel that my heaven is blocked and I'm not getting through. And when that happens, it's, we have to break through that.

And something, there's just something in there. Pride or lust or self-fulfill. I don't know.

But we have to break through these types of a thing. Having that you, he will speak and I will listen. So if something's blocked, for me, I take a look at myself.

I knew a brother. I won't say the name here. And he's at his funeral.

His neighbor came to me and said, you knew that brother? I said, I sure did. He said, can I ask you a question? I said, sure. He said, why is he screaming on the top of his house? That's a very holy man that I knew.

I said, what? He said, yeah, he would go up in the morning, stand on his house and shout up into the sky. And I knew this brother. He was at, I was at his funeral.

And I said, I can guarantee what he was doing. He was crying out to God over his children, over the church. Don't stop if you feel your heaven is blocked.

Check your heart, check it. Then you will call upon me and go and pray to me. And I will listen to you.

And you will seek me and find me when you search me with all your heart. That's a promise. I will be found by you, saith the Lord.

And I will bring you back from your captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and from all the forces of evil. All the places where I have driven you.

Thank you very much. Yes, all the places he's driven you, Dean. Some of you didn't like that place, did you? Some of these places have been hard, haven't they, hun? All the places I have driven you.

He's a part of that. He has a purpose. All things work together for good.

We don't have to ponder that we can trust him and walk through all that. And you will seek me and find me when you search me with all your heart. And I will be found by you, saith the Lord.

And I will bring you back from your captivity. I will gather you from all the nations from all the places that I have driven you, saith the Lord. And I will bring you to a place for which I cause you to be carried away captive.

Verse 36. He just keeps pouring out the blessings. Now, therefore, I'm going to finish up here with the blessings.

Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel. You know, when he sets up in the army, when we were in the army band, the generals had a certain, each star general had a certain cadence or call that we had to play for, you know, a certain song that we'd play for them. And it set up the idea that the general is about to speak.

And when I hear something like this, now, therefore, thus, or excuse me, yeah, now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel. It's like I hear in my mind. No, listen.

Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel concerning this city of which you say it is given into the hands of the King of Babylon by sword and famine and by pestilence. Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place and I will make them dwell in safety and they shall be my people and I will be their God.

I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me forever. We never lose that. I don't think even in heaven.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and I think it's the end of it too. Listen, if a fear of God. Young people, can you listen to me just for a minute or all of us? Do you know what that means? A fear of God? That means if I just go and do this thing or I candidly do this, remember that I don't care.

I just sin here. I carelessly live my life. It's without the fear of God.

I watch this. I go by that. I just live a careless life.

There's something about this. I don't know. It's like an anointing and you hear about the history of revivals.

Literally, the fear of God is like all you need. I will give them one heart and one mind that they may fear me forever for their own good and for the good of their children after them. I will make them an everlasting covenant that I will not turn away from doing good to them and I will put fear of me in their hearts.

He says it again, that they may not turn from me. If you're turning from God, if you're turning from a life of holiness, you're lacking the fear of God here. If you're turning the life of holiness.

41 in the last verse, I will rejoice in doing them good. Watch this now. It gets really good.

Listen to this. I will plant them in this land in faithfulness. Watch this.

With all my heart and all my soul. Could you imagine God? All his heart and all his soul pouring into you faithfulness, holiness, fear of God, one people, one covenant, one truth, all his heart and all his soul. Now that is a precious promise for I know the thoughts that I think towards you saith the Lord.

Thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you a future and a hope. We're in Babylon. We've been sent out as sheep in the midst of wolves.

You must persevere. You must walk in holiness and we must cling, live by these promises. Let's pray.

All of your heart and all your soul. God, I want that. So Lord, I do pray that to each and everyone within this room today.

I ask your Holy Spirit to be here and that you would put the fear of you here in our hearts. Young and old, put the fear of you here, Lord. And Lord, I pray God that in all of us as I get tired, I get weary, I get compromising, I get cynical, I get discouraged.

I get, Lord, forgive me, God. And I pray, Lord, I want to seek you and I want to seek you with all my heart because I know that's what's on the other side. That you'll hear me.

God, I have to admit, oftentimes I hear the... The ceiling is like brass. God, I know that the problem is me, not you. And so, Lord, I just pray, be with us now and let us truly walk in this treasure of grace and promises and thanksgiving of all this, Lord, that we can experience all your heart and all your soul in these

beautiful and precious promises.

I thank you, Jesus. In your name, amen.

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