

Promises Made; Promises Kept

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[0 : 00] Good morning. If you'd like to, there are plenty of Bibles in the pews around you.

! I think it's page 780 is where we're going to park a little bit today. So you can be turning there. You saw on the back of your bulletin there's a little bit of an outline to follow.

Now, Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11 may have been a favorite verse of many over the centuries. But I don't remember people quoting it when I was a kid.

I think that since the escalation of something called the health and wealth movement over the past few decades, this verse has probably been quoted as a favorite verse and is seen on plaques and in greeting cards and other Christian merchandise.

In fact, I just received this week a refrigerator magnet of Jeremiah 29 11. And I put it on my refrigerator, alright? Generally, this verse is quoted in the New International Version of the Bible.

[1 : 11] It goes like this, Now, on its face, I would say that believers, I want to emphasize that, believers in the Lord Jesus can say, Amen.

Certainly, God knows the plans He has for us, right? I mean, after all, they're His plans, right? And He works all things according to His will and for His own good pleasure.

His plans are for us good and not evil. We learn that from many places in the Bible. In Him, we have hope regarding the future, at least for our future glorification.

That's certain. There are good things to remember. These are good things to remember. Good reasons to give thanks to God and good reasons to rejoice. Unfortunately, too many people have fixated their attention on plans to prosper you.

I think assuming material possessions are the focal point of Jeremiah's prophecy. The expectation of hope in a future is often understood today as short-term in expectation of or anticipating material blessings here during our earthly lives, even expecting prosperity in the immediate future.

[2 : 36] And I would like for us to look a little bit more closely to the context of this passage. We'll get there in a couple minutes. I would like for us to... And part of the reason is I think that together we need to learn perhaps a little bit more about how to interpret the Bible so that we make sure that we interpret it correctly and that will help us sharpen our focus on the promises that God has made and promises that He will absolutely keep.

What I don't want to do is to rip off a promise like tearing, trying to remove a stubborn bandage and leave you in pain. I'm not trying to do that. But what I want us to do is to understand this passage in its context and then see if we can actually accurately and appropriately make some application and see if we can understand a little bit more what this is saying.

So here's the verse again. This is from NIV to start with. We'll get to another translation in a bit. 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.

Let's pray before we get into this. Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You that Your Word is given to us by You through prophets, apostles, and others who recorded it.

Thank You that we have it. You desire that we understand it. And You call us to make appropriate application to it. And You call us to have our lives driven by it.

[4 : 20] So help us, we pray, as we study this text and then encourage us by the promises that You have made. For Your promises that are made certainly are always kept.

And we thank You in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. Context in terms of where this verse appears. Nebuchadnezzar, that's probably a name you know.

Nebuchadnezzar was during the time of Daniel. He was involved with the Babylonian people, the Babylonian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar was leading the Babylonian army. He besieged Jerusalem about 605 B.C.

And he was on the threshold of taking the city. In fact, he succeeded actually in bringing the king of Judah, Jehoiakim, to a place of surrender. And he planned to take him back to Babylon.

But before the process could be completed, Nebuchadnezzar got a very serious and important message given to him that his father, the king Nebuchadnezzar, had just died.

[5 : 21] Well, he had to hurry and get back to Babylon in order to secure the throne for himself. So he didn't complete his siege against the city. But before he left, he did force Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, to promise loyalty by paying annual tributes.

It went something like this. You give me money, maybe I won't destroy you. How's that for an agreement? That was pretty much what was going on. So some of the Israelites were deported at this time.

Daniel, you know the stories of Daniel and his three friends. We know them as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were all transported back to Babylon. There are many others that were too.

Well, things went reasonably well during that three years that Jehoiakim was paying tribute to Nebuchadnezzar. But at the end of three years, he decided to no longer do that.

That was against the threat of Nebuchadnezzar coming back. But it was also against the warnings, the vigorous warnings by the prophet Jeremiah.

[6 : 37] So actually this verse that we're considering was written to the exiles from Jerusalem who were in Babylon. Not to the people in Jerusalem at the time, but to the exiles.

Those who were already there in Babylon, including Daniel and others. Jeremiah prophesied that the captivity would eventually end, but it would be many years before it actually would happen.

The city was captured in 597 B.C., methodically destroyed by the time of 586 B.C. Temple gone, walls gone, city gone.

Well, here's a portion of the text that will help us to get a grip on what Jeremiah 29.11 is saying.

This is from the English Standard Version, the version that we typically use here at Christ the King Church when we preach and teach.

So here it is. You can turn there if you like. It's the beginning of chapter 29. These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

[7 : 54] Thus says the Lord of hosts, verse 4, Now, what's he talking about? Babylon.

Babylon. All you people in Babylon do this. Seek the welfare of the city, Babylon, where I have sent you in exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

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, for it's a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name.

I did not send them, declares the Lord. For thus says the Lord, When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you. I will fulfill to you my promise, and bring you back to this place.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans for welfare, not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. So all that related to them being exiled, and then seventy years brought back.

[9 : 27] The rest of the part of the text I'm going to read begins at verse 12. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, and when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord.

I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I've driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

And that's what happened. After seventy years, God's promise was fulfilled. Judah was allowed back into the land of promise. But most of the people, I think this is important to remember, most of the people in exile, to whom the letter was written by Jeremiah, a letter probably written in 594 B.C., most of those people never made it back to Jerusalem.

You know why? Because if they were an adult going into exile, seventy years passed before they could go back. Most of them died in Babylon. Though false prophets, both in Jerusalem and in Babylon, claimed the captivity would be over very quickly, God, through Jeremiah, said no.

Even the time of the captivity was made very clear. In one of the verses I read, it was prophesied to be seventy years, and it was exactly true, just as God had said.

[10 : 53] All right. So, let's go back to that verse and see if we can learn a little bit more. Jeremiah 29 11. I'm going to read about four different translations, just to give you an idea of what translators

sometimes do with the text.

The verse that you often see on refrigerator magnets and other places, the verses that you see are almost always quoted in the New International Version.

And here's the verse. 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 in a future.

ESV, which we use, for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, plans for not prosper, but plans for welfare and not harm, but not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. King James, if you still are using the King James Version, goes like this. 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.

[12:04] The New King James, which updated a few things, said, for I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

So the Hebrew word that's translated prosper in the one text, welfare in another, and peace in the other two, is actually the word shalom.

That's the Hebrew word. So we're going to compare that a little bit with another passage, another verse, that comes from Jeremiah, comes from God through Jeremiah, and it's in Jeremiah chapter 38.

You can look at that if you like, chapter 38, verse 4. When Jerusalem was under siege, Jeremiah was telling the people to surrender to the Babylonians and to go with them into captivity without resistance.

That was his message. That's what God had told him to do. Remember? Go there and live the way you're supposed to live there. Raise your families there. Build houses there.

[13:06] But in 70 years will bring the nation back. That was the promise. Well, if the Jews refused and they stayed in Jerusalem, guess what would happen to them?

They would perish. So, Jeremiah's encouraging them, surrender to Babylon, go to Babylon in exile. Here's the verse. Then the officials, these are the officials of Jerusalem, in Jerusalem, said to the king, the king of Judah, let this man be put to death.

They're talking about Jeremiah. Let this man be put to death for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city and the hands of all the people by speaking such words to them. For this man is not, not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm. Interesting, isn't it? Just about backwards of what God had said.

The promise of peace was given to the exiles in Babylon, not to the people who were in Jerusalem. God's plan for the exiles was for their welfare, not for their harm, not for evil against them.

[14:14] If they surrendered to the Babylonians, but if they remained in Jerusalem resisting the Babylonians, harm would come to them. The officials were warning that if Jeremiah's counsel was followed, the results would be exactly opposite of what God had said, God had promised and Jeremiah had announced.

So Jeremiah was telling the exiles in Babylon to live out their lives in Babylon as normal as they could. The promise to return would come eventually, but for most, they would probably not see it. That's the background of our text. 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.

Now, let's look at application just a little bit. Is there appropriate application for believers from Jeremiah 29, verse 11?

Let's start with just looking at Daniel and his three friends for a moment. They were exiled to Babylon and they remained there. They rose to prominent positions there, actually, but their lives were not without trials and dangers.

[15:29] Remember that they were charged with betrayal by jealous coworkers. They were demanded to bow to idolatrous images or they would face death by being burned alive in a fiery furnace or thrown into a den of hungry lions.

You know the stories. With God's protection, these people lived out their years generally in peace as God had promised regarding their welfare and their protection from evil.

So do we have a parallel today? Well, though the fulfillment of the promise of hope and a future was decades away, God's purposes remained and he was in complete control.

Certainly that's true today. After 70 years, God promised his people that judgment would be fulfilled and they would go back into the land.

But even exile, God was with his people. In fact, I'm sorry, Isaiah prophesied about 100 years before any of this happened in a passage you know, Isaiah chapter 40.

[16:41] You know the end of it, I'm sure. He's talking about Babylon. He's talking about what was going to happen. Ten decades from there. Behold, the Lord God comes with might and his arm rules for him.

Behold, his reward is with him and his recompense before him. He will tread his flock like a shepherd. I'm sorry, tend his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms.

He will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young. even youths shall faint and be weary and young men shall fall exhausted but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. Most likely a prophecy for the people in Babylon.

Now I think we can make a good case right now that we as believers are essentially aliens, exiles, right?

[17:48] I mean, we are living in a Babylonish world, okay? We're living in a lost world, a messed up world, a terrible world and so in that sense we are kind of like the exiles of Judah and we need to remember that our citizenship is in heaven and Jesus promises us that we will have tribulations here, right?

But remember what he said, in me you will have peace. It's a great promise. And then he said, take heart, I have overcome the world.

So though we may live in a Babylonish world kind of today and we are exiles on our way to heaven, the problems are there, the difficulties are there, but we have his peace and we have the assurance that he has overcome the world.

Now there's no promise guaranteeing that we will be healthy and wealthy throughout this life. In fact, any biblical promises of prosperity for the believer is spiritual.

It's not physical. Some may live a long time and have excellent health. Others may be sickly most of their lives. Some will gain much of this world's possessions while others will have very little.

[19:08] Any riches we might possess did not come to us as rewards for faithfulness. In fact, sometimes they are more of a curse than a blessing.

The Bible talks about that. They are often a distraction from following Jesus. Contentment is the blessing regardless of whether we have little or much.

Thanks for that, Zach, yesterday. God has to understand the plans God has for us and for our peace and for our hope and for our future.

What I'd like to do is take those concepts that appear in Jeremiah 29 and transpose those, if you will, to the New Testament and give you promises promises that were specifically given to us as believers in Jesus right now.

Okay? So let's start with a sample of New Testament promises given to us by God about His plans for us. I love this passage.

[20:21] You know it, but sometimes we don't get the magnitude of it. For we know that those who love God, let me read it again, and we know that for those who love God, all things, all things work together for good.

Not all things are good. All things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. Talk about plans that God has for us. That's amazing.

What about this? This gets even more specific. Romans chapter 8 verses 31-32. If God is for us, what? Who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?

And the all things are all the things we live to live godly in Christ Jesus. That's His promise to us. Or how about this? Ephesians chapter 1. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of His will according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Wow. They're His plans for us. That good? And remember what God promises He always answers. He keeps His promises. Alright, how about peace?

[22 : 04] The Bible has some things to say about peace. Jesus said to His disciples, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you, let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Whatever our circumstances, we have His peace. That's a promise. peace. And the peace of God, he says in Philippians chapter 3, Paul writes, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

I'm so grateful we have something guarding that. Peace seems like for many of us sort of one of those it drifts in and out kind of thing. No, no, God guards His peace in us.

Peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds. Let's look at Romans 5. Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through Him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

[23 : 19] That gives us a transition now to hope. Here's some samples of what the Bible has to say to us. Promises of God to believers about hope. Here's the first one.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. These are Paul's words. They're amazing. For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That is hope. Amazing hope. We read from the words of Jesus in John 14. Let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.

Do you realize that the promise that God has made for everybody who belongs to Jesus is someday you will be with Him? Face to face? That's hope.

[24 : 36] And this I love from Peter chapter 1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Though we have not seen Him, though you have not seen Him, you love Him. And though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

And then verse 13 of chapter 1 he says, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That means our hope becomes reality. Our assurance is made full in the presence of Jesus.

And I love this passage. 1 John 3 See what kind of love the Father has given to us? That we should be called children of God? And so we are, John writes.

[25 : 49] The reason why this world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is.

And everyone who has and everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies Himself even as He is pure. That's real hope directed to a certain future.

And what is that future for us? Here are some passages that remind us of those promises. Romans chapter 8 again. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

It's going to happen. I look at myself and it isn't even close to being in the image of Jesus. But the promise that God makes is if He foreknew me, if He loved me a long time ago, predestined me to be conformed to the image of His Son, it's going to happen.

That's His promise. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, declared as righteous, and those whom He justified He also glorified.

[27 : 11] It's very interesting, Paul uses all past tense words there. Now, I get the predestined and the conformed and the called and the justified, but I got news for you, I'm not glorified yet.

Starting with my voice today, sorry about that. We're not glorified, we got aches and pains and difficulties and problems and the only thing certain for us in the future is probably a box, okay?

I mean, that's where we're kind of heading, unless Jesus comes back, right? But Paul says, it is so certain to happen, I already wrote it as if it did.

Not only have you been called, and not only have you been justified, you have been glorified in God's plan and purpose, that is your future guaranteed.

That's amazing. And he goes on, Jesus said to Martha at the funeral of Lazarus, I'm the resurrection and the life.

[28 : 17] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. The promise for my future is, the day I close my eyes on the planet earth and open them again, I will be in heaven.

Death, though he die, yet shall he live. That's God's promise. That's amazing. And how about this? Titus chapter 3, but when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

A couple more. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with the cry of command, with the voice of the archangel, with the sound of the trumpet of God, in the dead in Christ, our bodies rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain, who are left, will be caught up together with him in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, in this part of the promise. And so we will always be with the Lord.

What a promise. And then one of my favorite verses in all the Bible, Jude 24 and 25, now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forevermore.

[30 : 17] Amen. Now that believer is what God has planned for you. That's your hope in him. That's your future in Jesus Christ.

Our great God has plans for us and he's going to work them out, all those plans to perfection.

Those plans are not for evil. Those plans are for peace, his peace which he promised to us.

It's for our spiritual welfare which he promised us. He has promised us a future that will ultimately open up into eternity with him. That's our hope.

That's our confidence. That's our assurance. What the Lord said to the Jews in exile through the prophet Jeremiah was very good and very encouraging.

But what he has promised to us is beyond comparison. Hallelujah. To our wonderful counselor who has declared his plans and his purpose for us.

[31 : 23] Who as the prince of peace has extended to us a peace that passes all understanding. As the father of eternity has our future in his hands and as the God of might he will not let go.

To know and love this God is to have hope that it will never dissipate or be lost. All of this and more is yours if you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you trusted him? If not ask him to save you and watch what he does. He has a plan that includes peace and hope and a future for all who belong to him.

Hallelujah. Thank you Jesus for what you promised us. I'm hanging on to those promises.

Unfortunately he's got a hold of them even tighter and they will come true.

We've got an amazing future out of us. Let's pray. Father we thank you for your word and we thank you that your word is clear.

[32 : 30] We thank you that if we spend a little bit of time looking at it we may discover truths that we never really realized. We never saw them there before. We never were able to get into the depth of what they mean.

We thank you that you are a God who gives promises throughout your word. And to us you've given many promises and you keep them.

And we thank you for that. Our confidence is in you because you always do what you say. And so we rest in you. If there are some here who do not know you and never trusted you as Savior and Lord, dear Father I pray that you would call them.

That you would open their heart to believe. That they would cry out to you that they want to know you and trust you. And you would bring new life into their heart.

Save them. justify them. Declare them righteous. Welcome them into the family. And all those promises then are applied to them.

[33 : 41] Grant that we pray in your name. Your precious name. Amen.