

OCTOBER 18

With everything going on in the world, you might almost think that reading Jeremiah, 1 Timothy, The Psalms, or Proverbs would only reinforce the gloom. Today might be a case in point, but take notice of how each of these gives a realistic view of life, yet they also give a lot of hope in looking toward the future. Everything about following Christ now, every day, in this harvest is confirmed. Now is not a great time in this world, and so we work with the Lord, sowing, reaping and making disciples, who make disciples. The fullness of hope and rejoicing will be in the future. Yet even so, every day we have the taste and firstfruits of knowing Christ and receiving His comfort and blessing. We have this every day, because we walk with Him every day and look into His Word every day. You might want to listen to “Everyday,” by Hillsong.

Jeremiah 31:27-32:44

In Jerusalem's darkest hour God gave Jeremiah a far off picture of their ultimate restoration.

Jeremiah 31:27-40

The structure of this section is marked by the phrase *Behold, the days are coming*.

Vs. 27-30 Here God will replant Israel and Judah.

Vs. 29-30 The *sour grapes* message will be seen again in Ezekiel as a way the present generation blamed the previous generation. God didn't have much patience for that. During the future time of renewal, no one will use that saying. In Ezekiel God will condemn anyone who says this.

Vs. 31-37 This new covenant was initiated with Jesus' sacrifice and the giving of the Spirit, but its complete fulfillment will be the acceptance of Israel under that covenant in the Millennium. Much of this is in Romans 11 and it makes sense.

Vs. 33-34 These promises are still future, but what amazing promises. This passage is quoted in Hebrews 8 to persuade the people that going back into Judaism was not an option because the new covenant was better. This promise is one of the reasons the people listened to Peter on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 2 Peter referred to this promise as spoken by the prophet Joel, but the people saw this promise in all of the Scriptures dealing with God's future blessing of Israel. The people understood that only the Spirit of God could give them this heart and this renewal. The believers of Jesus had received the Spirit and had experienced this promise.

Vs. 35-37 God pledges His promise on the creation. In other words, this promise is absolutely solid. In Romans 11:29, Paul mentions one other thing that confirms this promise.

Vs. 38-40 This is the promise to rebuild the city, which was about to be destroyed. Jerusalem was destroyed again in 70 A.D. by the Romans. The city is still there today and without a temple. The future completed city will have the temple from which Jesus will reign.

Jeremiah 32

Vs. 1-5 Now I know this doesn't seem like a good thing, but if you were the only prophet speaking the truth in a city that hated you and where the people were going to be starving, being locked in prison might actually be a good thing. Seriously, I think this was God's work and that there is some grace in this.

Vs. 6-15 Normally this would not have been a wise move, since Babylon already controlled everything in Israel. It would have been like selling property in East Berlin after the Russians took over. Babylon owned everything and all ownership had no legality. I can see the sellers snickering when Jeremiah signed the papers. But God was making a point. I have a suspicion that when it was all said and done, Jeremiah settled down on this piece of land and enjoyed some much needed R&R.

We are also introduced here to Jeremiah's secretary and personal scribe, Baruch. We'll see later that Baruch must have been a well-known person; and as a result of his work for Jeremiah, God spared him from the multiple disasters that rolled over Jerusalem and the Jews.

Vs. 16-25 This is amazing praise from Jeremiah. He realized the grace and mercy in what God was promising. Jeremiah contrasted this mercy with all the sin the people had committed. Buying that land in such a bad time was a sign that God would restore Israel in the future. Isn't v. 25 an amazing declaration of hope?

Vs. 26-35 God restated the reason for His judgment on Jerusalem and Judah. Verse 35 didn't describe an act; it described a culture of distorted minds. We've mentioned before the reasons why Baal worship and Molech worship were connected. Notice how God mentions both *the children of Israel and the children of Judah*.

Vs. 36-41 In spite of Israel's failures, God promises to bring the entire nation back. Notice *the Lord, the God of Israel*. Notice that even though the people will be brought back in 50+ years, the ultimate fulfillment of v. 39 is in the Millennium.

Vs. 42-44 This promise goes back to the beginning of the chapter and ties in to Jeremiah buying the land.

Gloomy? Sure. Hopeful? Incredibly so. And so we don't lose heart, as we work in the harvest with the Lord, making disciples, who make disciples. We just need to stay in the Word every day and continue to follow every day.

1 Timothy 3

So, in reestablishing order in this church, Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 2, that all the people should pray for the government, in order to live quiet, respectful, godly lives under the radar so they can work in the harvest. Then Paul said the men should pray to maintain a godly perspective on life in prayer, and the women should focus on doing good works for those around them. The women should not be given the authority of establishing the teaching and guidance of the church, rather, that belongs to....

Vs. 1-7 ...the men who are the elders.

V. 1 I would say, from my experience, to *aspire* means they are actually involved in the lives of other people for the sake of the harvest and the Great Commission, coming alongside people in the church to encourage them to do likewise. I think to aspire is already to be doing it in some measure.

V. 2 I believe "one woman man" meant the same back then as it does in the US culture today: marital and sexual stability and faithfulness.

V. 3 *Not a drunkard*. This doesn't even say he can't get "merry" (see Ruth 3:7) on occasion, but drunkenness should not be a regular state, and wine cannot be an addiction.

Not violent means literally "striker," that is, someone who has fits of anger, losing his cool.

Not mentioned here, but putting all Scripture together, this person needs to be active in reaching the lost and making disciples. Too often you have this squeaky clean guy as an elder, who isn't involved in the harvest and doesn't know which end of the scythe to hold. These "executive elders" often have no natural desire to involve themselves in making disciples, who make disciples. Elsewhere, Paul says that we should look for examples and models (Philippians 3:17). I can't imagine making a person an elder who is not an example or a model of what it means to follow Christ in the harvest.

Vs. 8-13 Servants in the church.

V. 8 Paul addresses the men first with three characteristics similar to the elders.

V. 11 This is a very unfortunate translation. Although *wives* can mean "women" or "wives," it is the same word Paul used in chapter 2 and was never translated "wives" there. Also, here it is translated *their wives*, but that is not accurate since there is no genitive here, no case of ownership or possession. Honest to the Greek would be "the." I understand the King James doing this since it was translated in a culture and time when women would never have been accepted in this position, but the translators of the ESV had no excuse here. I think this poor translation is a result of the King James and the cultural prejudices of that time.

There were women deacons. In Romans 16:1, Phoebe is called a "servant" of the church at Cenchreae. The word is deaconess in the Greek. Why should this be a problem?

Also, why would there be some special condition for the wife of a servant of the church and not for the wife of an elder of the church. Elders' wives would have much more information and have much more influence over their husbands and the affairs of the church.

V. 12 is now using the masculine to describe all deacons, the same as we do rather than saying "him or her."

Vs. 14-16 Now, there are some very famous verses here, and the priority of the church is strongly presented; but this all really just underscores the vital importance of everything Paul has said since 2:1. The magnitude of these verses means we should go back and carefully follow all of chapters 2 and 3. If we don't, these are just nice flowery verses, and the church and the harvest suffers.

I still like the image of the church being a group of laborers gathering at some place in their part of the harvest. They meet to gain strength and encourage each other, get something to eat and then they go back out into the harvest.

Psalm 88

This is said to be the saddest psalm in The Psalms. It is possible that this psalm was linked with Psalm 89, possibly written by the same guy. The next psalm is very positive, and in tandem with this one, they would have made a nice part of the worship service.

Vs. 1-2 This is the plea to God, crying out to Him.

Vs. 3-7 This isn't just trouble; it sounds like depression. He is faced with many troubling situations and feels like God's wrath is focused on him. That is so "normal."

Vs. 8-12 Not only does he have bad situations, but his friends have become like traitors. This sounds like Job. The writer's plea to God is that once he is dead, God won't be able to use him in declaring God's praise and love. Therefore, he doesn't want God to let him go into the pit. Along with this is probably the sense of not wanting to be put to shame for having given praise to God and having put his hope in the Lord.

Vs. 13-18 It is odd to leave a psalm on such a down note. The crying is still there, the danger is still there and the sense of abandonment and desertion is still there. There is no final affirmation of trust and confidence in God's deliverance. However, the next psalm is coming.

Just a couple of observations:

First, we have seen in Job and even in Paul that great things come out of deep personal distress. If we are servants and slaves of our loving Father, we have to allow Him to do this to us for His glory. Having said that, we have to come through it the right way. It doesn't glorify God to give up, yell at your wife, kick the dog and defect from the faith.

Second, the very fact that the Holy Spirit inspired this psalm and its words should tell us that these words are what we need to imitate and model in our crying out to God. God is teaching us how to cry out.

Psalm 40:3 says, *He put a new song in my mouth*. God himself put that new song there, but only after He had led David through a similar experience.

We cry out and wait patiently. When He is done, He will put a new song in our mouths, a song of praise to our God.

Proverbs 25:20-22

I think Paul used all of this in Romans 12.

V. 20 It is a command to *weep with those who weep*. Being witty and happy isn't always the best thing.

Vs. 21-22 Read Romans 12:19-21 for the full story, and then add the promise found here of reward.