

OCTOBER 19

Today the readings in Jeremiah and in the first part of Psalm 89 link together. This is one of the side benefits of reading The One Year Bible. It is interesting to see how the promise to David was to inspire hope in the people. We know who that Son of David is, and He is the One who gives us hope too, as we follow Him in the harvest.

Jeremiah 33-34

We are inching closer to the fall of Jerusalem. There will be one notable look to the past; but from now on, everything will be fairly chronological, leading to God's unrelenting punishment of Jerusalem and Judah. It is instructive to see that interlaced with hard words of judgment, there is a reminder of the hope that will still save Israel.

Jeremiah 33

However, we are still in that section called "The Book of Consolation." It is always a good idea to underline, circle, or somehow mark words and phrases. Once you notice certain words, the structure and logic just pop out. And besides that, you stay awake.

Vs. 1-5 Notice both *the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah* and *thus says the Lord*.

As we have seen so often, there is a description of some event, in this case a bad one, followed by a declaration, in this case a good one.

The houses were broken down in the center of Jerusalem, and the stones were taken to build up the walls where the Babylonians were trying to get in. The holes where the houses had been would be used as places to dump bodies. That was a bad thing.

Vs. 6-9 The ultimate fulfillment of this will be after the Messiah returns. Notice the mention of *health and healing*. This is a contrast to the first five verses. The city would be called by God's name in the future.

Vs. 10-11 *Thus says the Lord*, but what is the focus of this?

Vs. 12-13 *Thus says the Lord*, but what is the focus of this?

Vs. 14-16 Here is how God will bring this blessing, through the Branch, the Son of David. Notice in v. 16 how the land, Judah, and the city are addressed, referring back to what was just said about the city and the land in vs. 10-13.

Vs. 17-18 *Thus says the Lord*, but what is the focus of this?

Interestingly, this doesn't say that a descendant of David will always sit on the throne, but that David will never lack descendants who could sit on the throne. Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David.

Vs. 19-26 These are very definite promises of God. The ultimate fulfillment of the covenant with David was unconditional, making it a promise from God's side. God initiated it. The same was true of the covenant with Levi which probably refers to the covenant of peace with Phinehas in Numbers 25:7-13. Also, the covenant with Abraham was unconditional. God chose Abraham and made a promise to him. Since these are based on the very character of God, they are more stable than creation itself.

Jeremiah 34

It is interesting to see how God made promises and gave hope as an encouragement for faith and obedience, but also as a test of faith.

Vs. 1-5 This appears to be a word to Zedekiah because of the good thing they had just done in releasing the slaves. So, to really understand what is happening with the rest of this, you need to

read v. 21. This explains why the people went back on their actions. The Egyptians came against the Babylonians, and the rulers and people thought they were OK again and recaptured the people they had set free. God was probably the one who stirred up the Egyptians and created this little time of confusion.

Vs. 6-7 This is a small historical note as to the stress of this particular time. There were only two other cities besides Jerusalem that hadn't fallen to Babylon. It looked like the end.

Vs. 8-16 What you see in this event is that the people obeyed God for themselves, to relieve the pressure. As soon as they "made" God answer them by their good deeds, they didn't need the good deeds anymore. They got what they wanted. Now, with Nebuchadnezzar leaving, they had to rebuild Jerusalem and they needed those slaves again.

Vs. 17-22 God would call the Babylonians back to finish their work against Jerusalem. Since the people had broken a covenant, God would punish them. This obedience and then lapse back into disobedience was a small, visible reminder to them that their punishment was just.

V. 18 Remember when God made the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15; animals were cut up and a lane was made through the body parts. Normally, the parties who made the covenant walked through that lane and swore the covenant saying that if they didn't keep the bargain, they should end up looking like those animals. In the covenant with Abraham, the promise of the new covenant, only God walked through that lane, taking the full responsibility for the covenant. This is why the ultimate fulfillment of that promise doesn't depend on Israel.

Here, many of the people who violated this covenant would soon look like road kill and probably be the bodies thrown into those lots where houses had stood in 33:5.

Israel only ever needed to be faithful. God would work out the rest because of His promise. In the work we do in the harvest, it is good to remember that in ways we do not know, behind the scenes, with amazing depth and wisdom, God is working out His purpose. Even our mistakes and lack of clarity are used by Him to accomplish His purpose. God has made a promise. He doesn't ask us to be perfect in all points, just faithful in following in the harvest.

1 Timothy 4

Having told Timothy how the foundation of the church is made secure, Paul warns him of the coming resistance and how to deal with it positively.

Vs. 1-5 Many people wonder what this teaching was or is; but the point is that Paul is telling Timothy and us, there will always be resistance. This challenge would look religious, very conservative and righteously judgmental, but it would be self-focused and isolating. I think what we read in chapter 1, about people becoming inwardly focused on the law and self-righteousness, rather than focused on Christ and grace and the harvest, comes into play here.

Vs. 6-8 This is a challenge to Timothy to wage the good warfare from chapter 1. If Timothy did his job right, at times, he would be in opposition to false teachers and to the prevailing opinions and moods of the people.

Interestingly here and even more so in 2 Timothy, Paul strongly warns Timothy to stay out of arguments over stupid stuff. I think this was Timothy's "youthful passion." He was good with his mouth and thought that he could win every argument. Paul directs Timothy to teach, not to argue.

Train yourself for godliness, I think, means to mindfully understand that you are being led by the Spirit into all circumstances and to respond in those situations in a way that honors God. You mess up sometimes, but you keep training. In the Greek, the word "godliness" does not have the word "god" in it. It means to give honor in everything. God is the assumed recipient, or as it says in the Lord's Prayer, *Hallowed be thy name*.

Vs. 9-10 This is the charge to Timothy and it is based on the gospel again. God is called the Savior for the third time. It seems that Paul is saying that it is this mission that has moved them to set their hope on God and to live following Christ into this harvest.

The words, *trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance*, have only been used one other place in this letter, and there it was a very emotional declaration for Paul. I think this is an equally emotional declaration here also.

Giving up "stuff" to give the look of being serious and suffering and making God happy seems religious. But following Christ as a disciple, setting our hope on Him, giving ourselves to the work in the harvest to reach the lost and make disciples, who make disciples, is the real deal. It is what we have been called to. It isn't religion. It is following Him, and it is full of grace. It involves suffering and putting aside things here, but even in the case of putting things aside, it is the Spirit directing us and showing us what does not fit into our lives on this earth so that we can follow in the harvest and do the work we are commissioned to do now.

Vs. 11-16 Notice the emotion and urgency in this. It pours out of vs. 9-10. Look at the crisp, short commands. This is the positive of what Timothy is supposed to do. He isn't supposed to waste his time countering the silliness; he was to teach and model what was healthy, sound and godly.

Notice the emphasis on getting the Word into people. The best way to grow disciples or protect people from error is to get them into the Word. The Word is used by the Holy Spirit to be our meds, our defense, our nourishment and our strength. It is truth and it consecrates us to God, to His service and to reality.

I think vs. 15-16 are very important. How many of us as disciples make this our hobby and passion? We need to perfect and get good at what God wants us to do in the harvest, and to live to be an example to others. Not many people take this to heart. We dabble, thinking we will keep God happy if we look semi-serious about actually getting good at being harvesters. If Christians put as much effort into their jobs as they put into their commission, they would probably be fired or working for minimum wage. Doing what you are doing now, reading through the Word every year, is a good place to begin.

V. 16 is important for all of us, not just preachers. We often let ourselves get out of shape emotionally, physically, sexually, etc., and we get tripped up. Some translations insert "your" before *the teaching* because of the word *yourself* that precedes it. Often too, we teach one thing and don't heed our own words. If more teachers, preachers and disciples did what they taught, they would *save* themselves from a lot of problems.

Save, here, obviously isn't salvation from damnation, but salvation from damage and becoming shipwrecked.

I think that reading the Word every day is a given. But beyond that, think of skills that would be good to learn for the harvest, that would be like a gift you could give to the Lord. Ask the Lord if this is something He would like, and if so, throw yourself into it. You might be surprised how the Lord will open doors for you to get good at that skill and use it to bear fruit, seeing lost people saved and making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples. Begin now by faith, and in a year or two you'll be surprised to see what the Lord has done. A line quoted in Oswald Sander's book, Spiritual Leadership, has always inspired me, "The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night." It's time to toil.

Psalm 89:1-13

This is the first of three days in Psalm 89. In some respects, this is a very redemption-oriented psalm. The *steadfast love* of the Lord runs through it. The promise to David is messianic. The

might of God in the creation and among the angelic hosts shows that God is in charge of everything. And somehow, in the middle of all of this, He regards us and loves us. What can we do but sing of God's love in the harvest?

And remember how much about David we just read in Jeremiah 33.

Vs. 1-4 It is interesting that not only did God make a promise to David that all of Israel could hold on to, but God Himself made David's life a visual statement of God's *faithfulness* and *steadfast love*.

Vs. 5-10 God's power and faithfulness are seen in creation. He controls the angels and He controls the raging of the elements. The most threatening powers are under God's control.

Vs. 11-13 The creation belongs to God and the creation gives praise to God. We should too.

Proverbs 25:23-24

I wonder if being that person with the *backbiting tongue* also makes you liable to marry the *quarrelsome wife*? In any event, I think the Lord is cautioning us not to be these people.