

JEREMIAH THIRTY-ONE, THREE

Intro: The Babylonian Captivity of Judah forms the background of our verse tonight. Jeremiah saw the people of God humiliated before a great Gentile power. He knew, as every other man of God did, that there was no reason why any nation should ever be able to overrun and conquer Judah. The Lord had given them a place and He had given them promises which had never been given to any other nation.

Let us read one of them. Cf. Deut. 28:7,

"The Lord shall cause thine enemies who rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face; they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways."

Moses had told them this knowing that he only had a short time to be with Israel, and longing to see God's blessing upon them.

No sooner had Joshua taken over the leadership when God made another promise. Cf. Joshua 1:5, 6,

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of good courage; for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I swore unto their fathers to give them."

Just 100 years before Jeremiah prophesied, another great prophet ministered in Judah. His name was Isaiah. Notice what God said to him in Isa. 54:17,

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from me, saith the Lord."

Many more could be added. *BUT THE PROBLEM HAD BEEN ISRAEL'S REPEATED SIN.*

But now the worst had come. Judah had even had more than 100 years to think about what had happened to Israel--but none of it did any good. *ISRAEL'S LONG HISTORY OF SIN AND DISOBEDIENCE CAME TO AN END WHEN BABYLON CAME IN AND CAPTURED JUDAH AND JERUSALEM.*

The big question now is, *IS THERE ANY HOPE?* Our verse tonight gives a wonderful answer to this question.

And the wonderful thing about this verse is that it still is true today. The very thoughts which ran through the minds of the people of Judah fill the hearts of any child of God who finds himself humiliated, defeated, and in despair as the result of his own sin and disobedience.

What is our hope?

A close look at this verse will indicate that we are listening, not to God, nor even to Jeremiah, but to the people of God, who are speaking.

What they are saying indicates that 1) they have been going back into the past, especially to things that God has said before. 2) They lay hold of one truth. 3) They are comforted by the realization of what God has done.

I. IS THERE ANY HOPE FROM THE PAST?

There is, they discover! "The Lord" who is Jehovah, ever the same, had "appeared" many times to His people throughout Israel's history.

"Of old" seems to be "from afar"--meaning in the land. Of course this was "of old," and the words seemed to be too good to be true.

IF YOU COULD SUM UP EVERYTHING THAT GOD HAS DONE FOR ISRAEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY? WHERE WOULD YOU LOOK FOR HELP? You could not look to anything the people had done, or should have done, because they had failed. Therefore, they were looking to see if there were any truth about God which could give them hope.

II. THE ONE TRUTH WHICH GAVE THEM HOPE.

It was the love of God for them.

It was not that God had ever said this in so many words, but looking back they could see that this was true, had been true right along, and the possibility was that it was still true!

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

This meant that God's love for them went back into eternity. IT WAS WITHOUT BEGINNING!

But it also meant THAT IT HAD NEVER CHANGED. Read the OT and then think about this for a while. In spite of all that Israel did to provoke God to anger, HE HAD NEVER FOR ONE MOMENT STOPPED LOVING THEM, NOR HAD HIS LOVE FOR THEM UNDERGONE THE SLIGHTEST CHANGE.

But, even more than that, it meant that it still was true. Even though the people were in captivity, God's love was still the same and would remain the same throughout all eternity!

Cf. Deut. 7:6-8; Isa. 63:7-9.

And here, as always, the love of God carries with it the idea of choice. He has chosen those He loves to be His very own.

But they discovered another thing.

III. THEY WERE COMFORTED WITH THE REALIZATION OF WHAT GOD HAD DONE, AND WHAT HE CONTINUED TO DO.

"Therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

This word "drawn" is a very interesting word. It means to keep, to preserve, to restrain.

It means that, with all of the evil they had done, THEY HAD NOT SINNED AS MUCH AS THEY MIGHT HAVE SINNED! Did you ever stop to think about this in your own experience? Do you know tonight that regardless of what you have done, you have never done what you are capable of doing?

Cf. Psa. 37:23, 24; Jude 24, 25. Think of this in connection with John 10:27, 28.

But it also means this: THAT GOD HAS NOT GIVEN UP WITH HIS PEOPLE. Cf. Phil. 1:6.

How touching the story of Peter's denial is in this case! God did not discard Peter; HE KEPT HIM. Think also of Moses! God did not discard Moses; HE KEPT HIM.

What would He restrain us, and what would make Him keep us? Is it anything in us? NO! He manifested it many times, and now the people are pictured as seeing it. "With loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

Concl: Could there be any more encouraging word for us? Is there anyone here tonight, a child of God, and you have been overwhelmed with discouragement because of things you have done? God never overlooks our sin. BUT, OH, HOW HE RESTRAINS US, AND, OH, HOW HE LOVES US. Such thoughts should bring any back who have strayed away from Him, and such thoughts should keep us walking with Him if that is where we are tonight.

Think what was in Peter's heart when he wrote,

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

This is 1 Pet. 5:10, 11.