

God's amazing plan despite a national disaster

Jeremiah was a young man who struggled to know God's plan for his life. As called by God to be a prophet, Jeremiah saw his nation disintegrating morally from within and witnessed his people who had been taken as captives to foreign lands. The anointing upon him was for proclaiming messages of warning and judgement upon the pride and rebellion of Judah along with the hope and promises of prosperity upon those who repent in life.

Jeremiah 29:11 is one of the favorite bible verses for us, "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". We too have a plaque at home with this incredible verse which had great impact upon our life and ministry while going through difficult times.

This promise is interpreted and applied out of context by many throughout history. Prosperity gospel preachers misuse this text for attracting others without emphasizing costly Christian discipleship, and false prophets quote it as a shortcut tip for deliverance, ignoring the need of repentance from sin. Can we interpret promise of God out of context? Here is the relevance of hermeneutics (principles of interpretation) in preaching God's word for healthy growth of the church.

1. We are to be realistic in knowing God's program. God's sovereignty and human responsibility are to be well integrated in our theology. Learning to pray for the peace and prosperity of their conquerors was one of their first lessons to learn in exile (29:7) to enjoy their life.
2. We are to be responsible in our divine assignment. It is common to have a temptation to please others through speculations and flattery. Hananiah prophesied people will be released in two years where as Jeremiah condemned it as a false prophesy and affirmed it will take place only after 70 years (29:10).
3. We are to be repentant in our sinful state. They were taken as captives to Babylon in three occasions (605, 597 and 586 B.C) was a national disaster for them. They were expected to seek with all their heart (29:13). Heavy flooding in Kerala or any other natural calamities are to be an eye opener for all to realize the need of turning away from material blessings to spiritual blessings through Jesus Christ.
4. We are to be restored for a blessed future. Instead of setting our mind to negativity, we could be optimistic in knowing that God has an incredible plan for His people despite evil circumstances (29:14). As a church let us trust in God's amazing plan of prosperity.

God bless you.

In His Glorious Ministry,

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God's Plan

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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.

Jeremiah 29:11

This verse in Jeremiah is usually used as a reference of encouragement and assurance of God's plan in our lives. Ever since the creation of man, God had a plan for His people. Which makes us wonder how we can make decisions that are aligned with God's will. There may be difficult situations in our lives that make us question whether God is really guiding our lives or whether He is absent all together.

The life of Joseph is a good example of how God's plan is fulfilled in His own time. Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers, thrown in prison and faced many injustices throughout his life. Despite these difficult circumstances, God blessed Joseph and made him into a great man. We might wonder why Joseph had to face all this suffering, but God knew that everything was done for good. Likewise, Joseph recognized that the hardships in his life were a part of God plan; he even goes on to say to his brothers that **"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good"** **Genesis 50:20**. Similarly, we might not understand why God is letting certain things happen in our lives, but it is at the end that God reveals his plan to bless us.

Kids will often beg their parents for something, but sometimes the parent will have to say no. The child wants a reason, but the parent can't give one because the child can't comprehend the things their parent does. This often results in the child saying something like, "you don't love me though he has no idea the sacrifices parents have made to raise the child and the purpose for withholding the thing. In the same way there have been times where you've asked God for something and you prayed day and night for it because you firmly believed that, that thing was best for you, but then God withheld it from you. You start to think that maybe God doesn't love you, but you forget how much he sacrificed for you and that he has a loving purpose for withholding that thing from you. You might not understand why God does certain things, but have faith because He knows what is best for your life.

So how can we get God's guidance in our lives? First, we must understand that God's guidance is something God does rather than something He gives. Therefore, we must unconditionally trust God and be willing to accept anything that God sends in our lives. For it says in **Proverbs 16:3** **"Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans"**. In addition, we must recognize that God's plan is eternal, all-encompassing, and unchanging. So, one day God will fulfill His eternal promise where we will look forward to a **"new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells"** **2 Peter 3:14**. So when we feel hopeless, know that like Joseph, God will raise you up to be stronger so that you can accomplish the purpose and mission to which you have been called.

In conclusion, let us continue to be obedient and faithful servants of the Lord and know that He is working his ultimate purpose through us and leading us to a day of greater good.