

Serving the Lord with Gladness, I

Serving the Lord with Gladness, Part One Jeremiah 31

May 1, 2005 by C.W. Powell

11 For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. 13 Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

This 31st chapter of Jeremiah is a wonderful chapter and gives a great deal of insight into the beauties of the Christian faith. It is so important that John Calvin gave nine lectures on this chapter alone. I think he made some mistakes in his lectures, but I think that his carefulness in not going beyond what was said explicitly in the text, made him fail to draw some applications that I think are very important.

This sermon is the general teaching of the chapter; I expect to give two and perhaps three sermons as they relate to worship over the next weeks.

With this in mind, let us consider several things about this chapter.

- I. The occasion of this prophecy from Jeremiah is the impending destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, the slaughter of the priests and royal family, and the carrying away of the people to Babylon. It would be a horrible, horrible time for the sons of Israel. It would appear as if the hope of Israel was cut off, that all the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to David and Solomon were null and void. The purpose these words from God was to secure the faith of the Lord's people and encourage them to live in hope.
- II. There are two themes in this prophecy.
 - A. The restoration of Israel, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the immense blessing that would come to Israel.
 - B.

The promise upon which all the other rested: the promise of the coming of Messiah. We know that this passage refers to Messiah because this chapter is quoted in the New Testament as prophecy fulfilled at the coming of Christ.

 1. verse 31-34 is quoted in Hebrews and said to be fulfilled in the days of Christ and all the trappings of the covenant from Sinai are done away.
 2.

There are some other passages that we will look at in a moment that point this passage directly to Christ.
 - C.

It is important to know that every good thing that came to Israel came to them through

Jesus Christ. All good things that come to anyone at any time are because of Jesus Christ. It is monstrous for men not to love and worship Jesus Christ. It is monstrous not to serve Him with joy and gladness for the multitude of His blessings.

III. The specific promises to Israel

A.

God's love would not depart from the remnant of Israel. Vs. 2,3 A remnant in the wilderness.

B. God would restore them to the land and rebuild Jerusalem. Vs. 8, 38-40

C. Great abundance would be restore to Israel. Vs. 12

D. There would be great peace and prosperity. Vs. 13,14.

E. The promises were as sure as the sun, the moon, and the stars and the tides of the sea: vs. 35.

F. What a beautiful picture is set before Israel: vs. 3-7

IV. But notice the reality of this picture:

A. The people who received this promise never saw its fulfillment.

1. Those who live in faith lived in hope; not for themselves alone, but for the generations that followed.
2. Christianity is not about personal goals and personal achievements. It is not about self-realization and self-attainment. It is much larger than that.
3. In Israel all the families of the world were to be blessed. It was future oriented.
4. The world is a better place when idolatry is exposed and the truth confessed; when the vain dreams of the wicked are refuted and tyranny confronted with the truth.

B. But was there nothing for the individual? Yes there was:'

1. Verse 7: They had the joy of the Lord, and were to sing with gladness and joy. This was in their hearts because they could not sing the Lord's songs in the presence of the people.
2. Why could they sing in their hearts: because of the promises of verses 1-3. They were the chosen of the Lord and God would not forget His promises to them. If Israel could sin in exile; then Paul and Silas could sing in the dungeons.
3. This was the bare word of God which they had and believed, for providence seemed to go against them.
4. This hope and confidence was the fatness they rejoiced in, though they were in a spiritual wilderness. All is a wilderness without this fatness; the fatness of faith: vs. 1, 10, 14.
5. What goodness of the Lord did they see? They had the portion of the Lord, and the inheritance of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The portion of David.
6. David portion is described in Psalm 23. David's life was a life of trouble and war; of turmoil and stress. But he described the peace of his soul in this great Psalm,
 - a. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
 - b. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. The Sabbath of the soul.
 - c. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness. Health and vigor in the soul. This does not depend upon outward circumstances. This is

the righteousness of faith; the faith that Abraham had. He believed in the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness. This was the rest that Israel found in the spiritual deserts of Babylon. This is the true peace of the soul and this was the rest that all of God's people have—the peace of God which passes understanding.

- d. Yea, though I walk through the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Those who have overcome the fear of death can endure the worst the world can offer.
 - e. Communism scoffed, and liberals still scoff at Christians: You promise pie in the sky by and by. We say to them, Well, what did you offer? Pie here and now; and hatred and envy, class warfare, murder and distress and tyranny. Pornography, pedophilia, abortion, murder of the aged and infirm—this is your socialistic pie that you promised us. It looks more like four and twenty ugly crows baked in a pie.
 - f. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The true temple is God Himself and true worship is in the heart of the believer. It begins now and is consummated in heaven. You may scoff at this promise as pie in the sky, but this is the confidence and joy of the child of God. This is the city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God. This is the temple of God that Solomon's temple only prefigured. When the church turns to idolatry and seeks her inheritance in this world, then the true temple is taken from her; she finds no peace even in the midst of great material blessing; when the altar of true worship is restored in the soul and the soul finds its portion in God alone, then she can find rest even in exile in a pagan land. The heart that is not at rest is an idolatrous heart, for it is not satisfied with God alone.
 - g. This is the fatness of both the priests and the people. Verse 14. And be assured that if the people are not fed the fatness of God's word, they whatever the priests boast in is the deceit of idolatry. The promises of eternal life are the hidden manna that the world knows nothing of. This is the secret of the Lord that only His people know.
 - h. This is the song of the Lord that does not depend upon the circumstances of the world; does not depend upon houses, lands, wealth, position, fame, or any of the things that men sell their souls for.
7. This is the wonder and beauty of this great chapter. Israel could rejoice in the bare promise of God, the historical details they would not see with their eyes, nor would even the next generation, and only the third generation would begin to see the barest beginning. Their temple was destroyed; their holy land defiled; their priests slaughtered and the noblemen slain. The land was devastated; the vines demolished; the farms ruined. But in Babylon, Israel would learn to worship again. When they had the temple and priests and a prosperous nation, they transgressed the law and bitterly raged against God; In Babylon, they would find rest and learn to rejoice in God alone.

The Lord willing, I will continue this next week.

May God bless you.

