

“I will restore their fortunes, declares the LORD.”

This is where we started at the beginning of the Book of Consolation, in Jeremiah 30.  
And this continues as the refrain throughout Jeremiah 30-33.

“I will restore their fortunes.”

“I will bring back the captivity” of Jerusalem.

God promises that you have a future!

### **Introduction: The Siege of Jerusalem and the Imprisonment of Jeremiah (v1-5)**

*The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. 2 At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem,*

Think about the context:

the army of Babylon is besieging the city.

This is the moment that Jeremiah has warned them of repeatedly!

God's judgment is coming.

They will go into exile for 70 years.

And...

*and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah. 3 For Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him, saying, “Why do you prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall capture it; 4 Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye. 5 And he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain until I visit him, declares the LORD. Though you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed’?”*

Zedekiah is the last son of Josiah.

Two of his older brothers – and his nephew –  
have reigned in Jerusalem before him.

In chapter 21, we heard how King Zedekiah had sent a messenger  
to ask Jeremiah to inquire of the LORD:

“Perhaps the LORD will deal with us according to all his wonderful deeds  
and will make [Nebuchadnezzar] withdraw from us.”

Perhaps God will do for us what he did for Hezekiah in the days of Isaiah the prophet!

At that time, Jeremiah had replied with the word of the LORD

that declared that Zedekiah would be given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar,  
and the city would fall – and only those who surrendered would live. (21:1-10)

Now we hear that king Zedekiah has imprisoned Jeremiah for the answer that Jeremiah gave.  
Notice that Zedekiah understands the message of Jeremiah clearly.  
Verses 3-5 contain a very accurate recounting of Jeremiah's message!

The city will be given over to the king of Babylon,  
Zedekiah will be given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar,  
and taken captive to Babylon.

In the eyes of his king Jeremiah is a traitor.  
Jeremiah has encouraged the people of Jerusalem to surrender –  
contrary to the command of Zedekiah.  
So he has imprisoned Jeremiah  
(probably to prevent him from spreading his “treason” among the people!)

So Jeremiah is in a rather difficult position.  
Jerusalem is under siege, and he is viewed as a Babylonian sympathizer!  
He has already prophesied that the exile will come – and will last for 70 years.

And yet, as he is sitting in the prison, the word of the LORD came to him:

### **1. The Obedience of Faith: Jeremiah Redeems His Cousin's Field (v6-15)**

*6 Jeremiah said, “The word of the LORD came to me: 7 Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you and say, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.’*

At first, this may seem like a strange word from the LORD.  
So far, everything in Jeremiah has been very focused on public events.  
But as we saw this morning, the redemption of land *was* a public event.  
And, as we saw this morning, the redemption of land  
is all about land and seed – and the inheritance of God's people,  
which depends upon the presence and the blessing of God.

So when the LORD tells Jeremiah that Hanamel will come and make this request,  
Jeremiah would understand what it means.  
Hanamel has mortgaged his property, but is unable to pay the mortgage back.  
Therefore, Hanamel needs some family member to redeem the property.

*8 Then Hanamel my cousin came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.*

You and I, perhaps, do not realize quite what Hanamel is asking.  
Christopher Wright summarizes the situation well:

“Jeremiah was imprisoned with little prospect of release

to enjoy the delights of rural husbandry.  
 For all he knew, he might never live to see the field he was being asked to buy.  
 “He had no wife or sons of his own,  
 no posterity to whom the land could belong in the future...  
 [Jer 16:2 - “You shall not take a wife,  
 nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place.”]”  
 “The field in question was at that moment most probably  
 being trampled by the occupying forces of Nebuchadnezzar.  
 Any vineyards or olive trees would have been burned to the ground.  
 “Jeremiah knew that the prospect for the city and its surrounding villages  
 was utter devastation,  
 and for the people of the land exile for at least two generations.  
 “And your cousin wants you to buy his field at such a time?...  
 “In Hanamel's case, the motivation would have been as clear to Jeremiah  
 as to *all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard* (12),  
 who were watching with amused disbelief  
 the fastidious legal ceremony that followed:  
 Hanamel was converting a worthless asset into ready cash  
 by cynical manipulation of his aging relative.” (p343)

Think about it.

Jeremiah has no children.  
 Jeremiah will redeem the land – for 17 shekels *now*.  
 And Hanamel (or his children) will be able to redeem the land *back*  
 later – after Jeremiah is dead – and the Babylonians are gone.  
 For Hanamel this is a no lose approach.

For Jeremiah, it's a no win.  
 He's out the cash – and if he is a true prophet of Yahweh -  
 there is no chance that he benefits from this!

If it hadn't been for the word of the LORD,  
 Jeremiah would have laughed at him!  
 But when it happened that Hanamel came and asked Jeremiah to do this,  
 Jeremiah knew that “this was the word of the LORD.”  
 So he did it.

*9 “And I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. 10 I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. 11 Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions and the open copy. 12 And I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my cousin, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard.*

This is the first that we have heard of Baruch.

It will not be the last!  
Baruch is Jeremiah's scribe, who writes down the words of his prophecies.  
But here Baruch is recording an ordinary purchase.

But after making the purchase, Jeremiah gives a special charge to Baruch.  
There are two parts to this charge – both marked by “Thus says the LORD of hosts,  
the God of Israel.

First, verse 13:  
*13 I charged Baruch in their presence, saying, 14 ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time.*

God says to put these deeds in an earthenware vessel for long-term storage.  
(After all, it will be 70 years!)  
70 years from now both Jeremiah and Baruch will be dead.  
But future generations will need to know that this land belongs to Jeremiah's heirs

And that is the point of verse 15 – the second part of God's charge to Baruch:

*15 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.’*

Remember that Jeremiah has already said (years before) that the exile would last for 70 years.  
Therefore, Jeremiah knows that it is highly unlikely that he will ever get  
any benefit from this purchase.  
He is out 17 shekels of silver  
(during a siege – when food is only getting more expensive).

Why does Jeremiah do this?  
The law of redemption was intended to ensure that the land remained in the family -  
so that the inheritance of Israel would remain with *all* the people,  
and not consolidated into the hands of the rich.

Again, Christopher Wright:  
This was “faith in a future he would never personally see or enjoy.  
His was the obedience of faith.  
He quite literally put his money where his mouth was....  
Seventeen shekels of silver were surely never better spent.” (p344)

## **2. The Prayer of Faith (v16-25)**

Jeremiah has done what God told him to do.  
Jeremiah understands the basic point:  
“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:

Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.”

I think that the ESV heading (Jeremiah Prays for Understanding) is misleading.

It certainly led me to think that Jeremiah was asking a question at the end of verse 25.

But Jeremiah does *not* ask a question!

Verse 25 is a statement – it is where Jeremiah  *marvels* at what God has done!

But listen to how Jeremiah starts his prayer!

Jeremiah spends three-quarters of his prayer remembering who God is,  
and what God has done!

**a. Who Is God and What Has He Done? Where Every Prayer Should Start (v16-22)**

16 “After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD, saying: 17 ‘Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.

Verse 17 starts by acknowledging that God is the creator of all things.

And because God made the heavens and the earth  
by his great power and his outstretched arm,  
therefore *Nothing is too hard for you.*

When you are praying, you *need* to remember that you are coming to the Creator -  
the one who can do anything!

Too often we betray that we do *not* believe this -  
because, first, we *do not pray!*

We do not come to God, because we think that we don't need him!

And even when we do come to God, we do not stop to remember who he is!

Nothing is impossible for God -

and in verses 18-22, we hear of the “impossible” things that God *has done!*

18 You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, 19 great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.

In verses 18-19, Jeremiah focuses on God's character.

You show steadfast love – *hesed* – to thousands (echoing the third commandment)  
repaying the guilt of fathers to their children after them.

You might say, “Wait, we just heard in 31:29-30, that each one dies for his own sin!

How come Jeremiah now says that children pay for their fathers' sins?”

Ezekiel is the one who will address this more explicitly a generation later -

but the simple answer is that very often a son will inherit his father's sin -  
and thus, he will also inherit his father's guilt!

But you can see that here in verse 19, as Jeremiah says that

God rewards each one according to his ways  
and according to the fruit of his deeds.

Verses 18-19 express the paradox of God's love and God's justice.

God shows *hesed* covenant faithfulness.

Of course, if we are covenant breakers, then how is God's "covenant faithfulness"  
a good thing for us?

Jeremiah understands that Love and Justice come together in God.

And you see something of what this looks like in God's mighty deeds in history (verses 20-22):

*20 You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day. 21 You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror. 22 And you gave them this land, which you swore to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

This is the standard confession of Israel.

It would be like someone praying the basic outline of the Apostles' Creed -  
like the prayer of the disciples in Acts 4:24-28.

If we listen to the prayers of scripture, then we will make the mighty deeds of God  
a regular part of our prayers.

We do this for two reasons:

First, because we love God.

You all have heard sports fans praise their favorite players.

When you love someone, you love to praise him – you delight to honor her.

Even so, if you love God, you will remember his mighty deeds.

And second, we recount the mighty deeds of God regularly in our prayers  
because it reminds us of who we are talking to!

If all you do is spout off your own desires and requests,  
then you are saying that you do not love God –  
and that you do not care what he has done.

Further, when you remember who God is and what God has done,  
then you are in a much better position to see who *you are*!

Which is where Jeremiah turns in verse 23:

**b. But Now You Have Made All This Disaster Come: And Then You Had Me Buy a Field! (v23-25)**

*23 And they entered and took possession of it. But they did not obey your voice or walk in your law. They did nothing of all you commanded them to do. Therefore you have made all this disaster come upon them.*

Jeremiah recognizes that “all this disaster” (literally, “all this evil”) has come upon us because our fathers did not obey your voice or walk in your law.

This is the way that the children pay for their parents' sin.

The reason why the world is such a mess today  
is because of your ancestors.

I've been reading essays that show clearly  
how the English and French division of the Middle East after World War 1  
created much of the mess today.

Of course, those essays neglected to mention that the Ottoman Empire  
had already created a mess before that –  
and the Mamelukes before that -  
and the Arabs before that -  
and the Romans and the Persians before that -  
and – well, we could go all the way back to the Babylonians and beyond!

We have inherited a mess from our fathers -  
and we have only made it worse!

And so Jeremiah speaks to God of what is happening right now:

*24 Behold, the siege mounds have come up to the city to take it, and because of sword and famine and pestilence the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. What you spoke has come to pass, and behold, you see it.*

We look around us and we see sword and famine and pestilence.  
Our enemies are winning -  
and what is more, “what you spoke has come to pass, and behold, you see it.”

As you bring your prayers to God,  
remember that you are not giving God any *new* information!  
He already sees it.

But he wants you to bring your heart to him!  
And so Jeremiah brings his heart to the LORD:

*25 Yet you, O Lord GOD, have said to me, “Buy the field for money and get witnesses”—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.”*

This is not a question.  
We're being besieged by the Chaldeans.  
You have told me that we'll be in exile for 70 years.  
And yet you tell me to buy a field.

Jeremiah does not ask why.

He knows why!  
God has called him to be a sign to Jerusalem of Yahweh's *hesed* –  
of his covenant faithfulness to Israel.  
And he marvels that God has given him this privilege of being an example of *hesed*.  
“At the very moment when the guilty past has crashed into an inescapable present,  
God asks Jeremiah to invest in an almost inconceivable future.” (346)

Jeremiah's redemption of Hanamel's land  
is a small portrait of the greater redemption wrought by Jesus on the cross.  
There, at Calvary, God's steadfast love and justice meet together,  
as “only in exercising both wrath *and* redemption would the Judge of all the earth,  
for whom nothing was too hard, do right.” (Wright, 346)

What is the point of Jeremiah's prayer?

Jeremiah is teaching us what it means to *believe God*.  
To believe God means to step forward in faith and do what God says  
even when it seems crazy.  
It means to invest in a far distant future even when you cannot imagine  
how it will work out.  
Remember that Jeremiah is not married (ch 16).  
He has no children.  
And yet he will invest in a piece of land that he will not possess for 70 years.

That requires faith!

Just like it required faith for Abraham to go to a land  
that his heirs would not possess for 400 years.  
Just like it required faith for Jacob to earnestly seek the blessing of Isaac -  
even though it would bring him *nothing* in his own lifetime  
(because Isaac also owned no property to bequeath!).

Just like it requires faith for Rex and Becca to spend their lives  
in the fruitless work of bringing the gospel to the T.  
They will spend their *whole lives* doing nothing more than preparing the ground  
for someone else – someday – to plant the seed.

(We *pray* that God will move more quickly -  
but 70 years would not be unlikely.  
Neither would 70 years be a problem!)

I said fruitless.

But fruitless only in the sense that Jeremiah's redemption of the land was fruitless!  
Someday, according to the promise of Jesus,  
there will be a T church!  
And maybe there will be a written record  
of the faithful doctor and his wife  
who devoted their lives to preparing the ground.

But maybe not.  
But even if there is no written record – even if there is no memory of them -  
their work – in the Lord – is not in vain!  
They have gone forth in the obedience of faith,  
and have labored faithfully to prepare the ground.

In the midst of siege, imprisonment, and impending exile,  
Jeremiah marvels at the faithfulness of God!

### **3. The Answer of the LORD (v26-44)**

#### **a. Why Am I Bringing Disaster? Because of Their Abominations (v26-35)**

*26 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 27 “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?*

The LORD answers Jeremiah's prayer.

And he starts by agreeing with Jeremiah (see verse 17)!  
Yes, I am the creator of all things.  
Nothing is too hard for me!

And then in verses 28-29, the LORD explains again what he will do:

*28 Therefore, thus says the LORD: Behold, I am giving this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall capture it. 29 The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city shall come and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs offerings have been made to Baal and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods, to provoke me to anger.*

And the reason for this destruction is given in verses 30-35.

In verse 30 God says that the “children of Israel have done nothing but evil in my sight.”

*30 For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth. The children of Israel have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands, declares the LORD.*

This reminds us of the language of Genesis 6,  
where God says that mankind does only evil all the time.  
And even after the Flood, God said  
that the heart of man was inclined to evil from his youth (8:21).

Notice the connection again between Land and Seed:

God destroyed the world by the Flood –  
because of the wickedness of man (the inhabitants of the world!).  
Now, God will destroy Judah and Jerusalem –  
because of the wickedness of the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

And so God describes their rebellion and his coming judgment in verses 31-35:

*31 This city has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built to this day, so that I will remove it from my sight 32 because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah that they did to provoke me to anger—their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33 They have turned to me their back and not their face. And though I have taught them persistently, they have not listened to receive instruction. 34 They set up their abominations in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. 35 They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

This reminds us of the central themes of chapters 2-10,  
how prophets, priests, kings, officials – and all the people –  
had turned away from the LORD their God.

And, once again, after hearing God's case against Judah and Jerusalem,  
we find a “therefore.”

**b. But “I Will Make with Them an Everlasting Covenant with Them” (v36-41)**

In verse 36, God quotes Jeremiah's prayer (from verse 24).

*36 “Now therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence’:*

After reading verse 36, you would expect to find a statement of *judgment*,  
after all, verses 26-35 has given the litany of sins that have resulted in this judgment!

But that's not what you hear in verse 37!

*37 Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. 38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*

In Hebrew, the opening words of verse 37 are “Behold, I.”  
Maybe we should translate it, “Behold, I myself will gather them”  
or perhaps, “Look at me! I will gather them”

God makes clear that the covenant theology of Israel is *all wrong*.

If Israel's hope is based on what Israel does,  
then Israel is doomed.

Let me say that again, but a little more clearly:  
If your salvation is based on what *you do*,  
then *you are doomed!*

*Only God can save!*

And that is God's message to Jeremiah.

*39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. 40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. 41 I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.*

We saw last time that the failure of the old covenant meant that God must make a new covenant.

And this covenant must be different.

Because if God makes a covenant with Israel that depends on Israel's performance,  
then Israel has no future!

So notice how *everything* in verses 37-41 focuses on what *God* will do!

“I will gather them...

I will bring them back...

I will make them dwell in safety...

I will give them one heart and one way...

I will make with them an everlasting covenant...

I will put the fear of me in their hearts...

I will rejoice in doing them good...

I will plant them in this land in faithfulness...”

In verse 27, God had said,

“Behold, I am Yahweh, the God of all flesh Is anything too hard for me?”

Now in verse 37, God declares one of the impossible things that he will do!

“Behold, I will gather them...”

Verse 38 asserts once more:

“they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”

There are two impossible things that God will do.

First, he will destroy Jerusalem – his own city –

the place where he promised his name would dwell forever.

And he will do this because they have rebelled against him.

And then second, he will restore Jerusalem -

in spite of their rebellion!

And that's stated clearly in the conclusion in verses 42-44:

### **c. I Will Restore Their Fortunes (v42-44)**

*42 “For thus says the LORD: Just as I have brought all this great disaster upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them. 43 Fields shall be bought in this land of which you are saying, ‘It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the*

*Chaldeans.' 44 Fields shall be bought for money, and deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed, in the land of Benjamin, in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb; for I will restore their fortunes, declares the LORD."*

Jeremiah does not dodge the hard questions.

He does not make excuses for God.

He rejects the pious platitudes so common today:

“My God would never bring trouble into my life!”

Jeremiah says, No, if you serve the LORD of hosts,  
then you serve a God who brings trouble and judgment  
to those who sin against him.

But if you serve the LORD of hosts,  
then you also serve a God who restores his people  
and redeems them from all their trouble!

There is no way to glory – except the way of the cross.

But through the cross God has restored the fortunes of his people.

And because of this, we need to invest in the far-distant future!

Sure, I would love to see the T's come to faith in Jesus today!

But I *know* – because of Jesus' promises – that they will someday!

So we work toward that end.

Likewise, I would love to see the church of Jesus Christ in South Bend  
reflecting more of the unity that Christ has called us to.

And I *know* – because of Jesus' promises – that it will happen.

So we work toward that end.

And how will this happen?

Just as Jeremiah was called to redeem Hanamel's land -

because *that's what the Law of Moses called him to do* -

so also, we should do what the scriptures call us to do!

In our culture, it may seem strange to devote ourselves to preaching, sacraments, prayer,  
psalmody, Sabbath-keeping, and sharing what we have with one another.

To many, these may seem as strange as the practice of redeeming land in the middle of a siege!

But when you walk by faith, then you live by a different standard than those who walk by sight.