

GAINING UNDERSTANDING AND PEACE IN THIS TIME PART II

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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. As things are getting more intense in this moment in the history of the world, it is important that you and I have the right perspective about what is happening so we may remain sober and respond adequately as families and as the church.

II. LEARNING FROM HISTOR

- A. The Bible tells us about many times when the people of God lived through moments very similar to the one we are living in right now. It also reveals how behind everything that was happening, God had a very good and deliberate plan. **This is what is happening at this time.**

Jer. 29:1 "These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon."

- B. God had warned the people of Judah through His prophets long ago that something really difficult was about to happen. They were going to be conquered by Babylon and be exiled to a foreign land. Without a doubt this news was difficult to swallow and they must have asked themselves, "How could God allow something like this? Why, if He made a glorious covenant with Abraham? **Whatever the case, the exile happened just as God said it would.** Jesus said that the things that are happening are necessary. God always uses the least severe means to achieve the best results

Mr. 13:7b "...do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet."

- C. Both in what has happened and what we are currently going through we can see divine sovereignty at work, even if it is difficult for our human understanding to grasp: **God is always doing something good.** That is the essence of His reign, justice, and mercy.

Sal. 89:14 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you."

- D. We, as His people, **are in agreement with and submit ourselves to the redemptive discipline of God.** The world does not like God's judgements but we join in with the multitude of heaven saying, "**his judgments are true and just**" (Rev. 19:2). Many are ashamed of a God who disciplines but **we know that when we go through many hardships, that pain brings us to consider deeper things.**

- E. It is important to discern what He is saying and respond appropriately. As His people we position ourselves in prayer, fasting, we repent of our sins and cry out for mercy.

Joel 2:12-13 y 17 "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 13 and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster... 17 Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, "Spare your people, O Lord."

- F. The situation the people of Israel lived in the time of the prophet Jeremiah was so definitive that God told them this was the new normal. They would have to get used to this reality.

Jer. 29:4-7 "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.»"

- G. It's as if God was saying: **You must adapt and accept the situation because I am doing something good among you. In fact, I want you to be my vessels in this city. We don't know what life will be like after this but we do know God is preparing us for what is to come and we must be willing to learn.**

Jer. 29:7 "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

- H. God wants to use us in this moment of history to be a testimony in the cities where we live. **We have a great opportunity in this moment as the body of Christ to be a fountain of strength and clarity.** Many people feel alone, frustrated, and depressed. They go back to what they have felt bring them peace. But it's time for you and I to rise, we are the answer.

1 Ped. 2:12-17 y 17 "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people... 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."

- I. **What God wants from us is that when people on the outside see our good works and the way we are content even when we lack food and the way we go above and beyond for them** – with no hidden motives – they would speak of the greatness of our God. **When you dedicate time to them and**

they see your consistent peace, it is a testimony for them. I encourage you to knock on the doors of your neighbor, or call them to talk to them and go above and beyond for them. We are meant to be among the gentiles. They are watching us and instead of calling us evil they will glorify God.

- J. **Do we care about the city or just about our little world? Are we responding in a way that brings good to those around us or are we hiding?** We have to act in a way where after the most intense part of all this passes people can say, "we remember the way you acted in 2020.

- K. **God was in such control of the exile and the judgements that He assured the people through Jeremiah that it would be for a limited time. God is Lord of history; nothing takes him by surprise.**

Jer. 29:10 "For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place."

- L. God is saying: I have everything under control and I have made promises and they will come to pass. **Behind all of this God had a better plan than what they could imagine. Even today, God is doing something so good among His own;** this is where we get the famous promise from this chapter:

Jer. 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

- M. **The people of God can trust in His sovereignty, wisdom, and relentless love.** Our emotional security is based on the confidence that His love is unstoppable. In every situation there are 3 forces operating: 1. God is always doing something good; 2. The enemy is always seeking to destroy (**Jn. 10:10**) and does so by lying to man so he will sin and fall into a curse; 3. Humans must decide who they will follow. **When we submit to God we ruin the enemy's plans.**

Sant. 4:7 "Submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

- N. **In this time, God's heart is to prepare us and it is important to discern and respond rightly.** At the same time, **prayer has always been key to define what will happen. God wants to use our prayers.** Our cry aligning to His heart is key; He wants a greater agreement with his heart.

Jer. 29:12-14 "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."

- O. The Lord is fighting for us to be completely his. He will not stop doing things according to His perfect plan even if it is painful or uncomfortable. Not only does he want us to stop sinning, he wants us to draw near to him. What will we say we learned in this season?

Jer. 29:14 "I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I

have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. This was the story of God's people and it is what we are living now. We are not the first or the last to walk through trials, but we are not just trying to bear it. The Lord says, **"I want you to talk to me. I want to restore your family. How are you responding this time?"**

1 Ped. 4:12-13 "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."

IV. REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What is good things is God doing in you during this time?
2. How can you better respond to what is happening?
3. What do you think God hopes for you to do for those around you so you can testify of His love?