

Getting through the Pain

Key Verse: *“I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”*
—Jeremiah 29:11

Selected Scripture:
Jeremiah 29:1-14

OUR SELECTED PASSAGE

of scripture records Jeremiah's prophetic letter of encouragement to the nation of Israel, which had been taken into captivity in Babylon when Jehoiachin was king. Even though this captivity was a result of their trust in deceptive words and their idolatry, God had not forsaken them. He still loved them and provided guidance and instructions for their comfort. His instructions were to settle there, build houses, plant gardens, raise families, and that their numbers were to increase and not to diminish. If they were to live in a manner pleasing to God, they would live comfortably in Babylon. They were directed to pray for the good of the country where they were captives. While the king of Babylon protected them, they could live quiet and peaceable lives under him in all godliness and honesty; patiently leaving it to God to work deliverance for them in due time. God had said that their period of captivity was to last for seventy years, and then he would bring them back to their beloved Jerusalem. “Thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.”—vs. 10

Our Key Verse very clearly shows God's great love for, and interest in, the welfare of his children. What a wonderful reassurance this must have been to the captive nation of Israel, to know that the great God of heaven did not desire hardship and despair to come upon his people, but rather he had their best interests at heart. They were to remain patient and composed, and trusting in God's wonderful providence.

Our human weakness sometimes causes us to fear that God's designs are all against us; but even that which to us might seem evil, is for good. The Apostle Paul so beautifully stated that God causes "all things [to] work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) The Prophet Isaiah declares God's great wisdom and foreknowledge, who is able to declare "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."—Isa. 46:10

As it was with the nation of Israel, many people today are often very uncertain regarding their circumstances. They may feel alone and abandoned, but with the Lord there is no variability, he is steadfast in his purpose because he knows the consequences of every action. With God there is total consistency, and we read that with "the Father of lights" there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."—James 1:17

As this letter from Jeremiah was a source of encouragement to Israel in their captivity, it is encouraging for us as well to know that this welfare and hope stated is guaranteed to us by his Word of promise. We are assured that he is with us and will continue with us if we heed his counsel. God knows the end from the beginning. He knows, therefore, how to direct the affairs of his people. How wonderful is the thought that the Almighty has promised to guide his people through the difficulties of the present life. As David has expressed it, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."—Ps. 73:24 ■