

Settle Down • Jeremiah 29:1-7

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Hermits*

1. An interesting change took place in the church of the 4th Century
2. Up to that time, the heroes of the faith were those men and women who stood up boldly to face persecution
3. The model Christian was the **courageous bishop** of some city who would be dragged before the wild beasts in a Roman arena
4. But with the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine, all that changed
5. Once the Church became an accepted institution in society and being a Christian was almost fashionable,
6. The image of the model Christian became the **hermit** who fled the city, turned his back on the world with its comforts, and retreated to the wilderness to live a lonely life of exile
7. In fact, the word *hermit* comes from the Greek word for **desert**
8. It was thought that there in the desert, a man or woman would be free of the temptations so common in the cities
9. And because of that, they could live a life of closer fellowship with God
10. But as hermits became model Christians, they became **popular**
11. And soon the few hermits who had fled the cities to live in caves and tombs saw a steady stream of people coming out to seek their wisdom, or take them gifts of food and offerings
12. One hermit, **Simon Stylites**, became so popular there was a constant crowd around the mouth of the cave where he lived
 - a. so he built a pillar and climbed on top of it to get away from the crowd
 - b. he spent the next 30 years of his life on top of that pillar!

B. *Monasteries*

1. While hermits became the new heroes of the faith, the **solitary life was too much** for most people
2. They wanted to flee the world, but they didn't want to be alone
3. So the monastic movement was born
4. The idea was the same – retreat from the world to a closed community
5. There, they could live lives of undisturbed devotion to God
6. Entering a monastery meant taking **a vow**
 - a. that vow typically meant promising to be **celibate**
 - b. and to **renounce worldly wealth** and riches

C. *The Christian & The World*

1. When you read about this period of Church history, you have to wonder if the believers of that time ever read Jesus' prayer in **John 17**
2. Jesus prayed to the Father and said,

- 15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.
- 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.
- 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.
- 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.
3. Or if they ever read what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 5, that remaining pure did *not* require that believers retreat from the world
4. Indeed, the Church is **IN THE WORLD** – we must simply ensure that the world **IS NOT IN THE CHURCH!**
5. It's in Jeremiah's prophecy that we, as the people of God, get some vital counsel on how we are to live the life of Faith in the midst of the World.

II. TEXT

A. Set The Scene

1. The Babylonians have already asserted their dominance over the entire region
 - a. they've defeated Judah and placed the nation under tribute
 - b. the greatest blow to the nation was the **deportation of the king**, the royal family and most of the nobles and elders of the people
 - c. **several thousand of the key leaders were now exiled** in Babylon
2. These exiles were having a hard time of it because they **refused to accept** their situation
3. Their unrest was **fueled by a steady stream of false prophets** who told them the Babylonian power would soon be broken and they would be allowed to return to their homes in Judah
4. **Jeremiah knew better**
 - a. God had told him that the exile would last **70 years**
 - b. even worse, in just a short time, the Babylonians would return to Judah and lay waste to it
 - c. the mighty city of Jerusalem would be destroyed, the magnificent temple would be leveled, and an even greater deportation of the people would take place
 - d. but after 70 years, the Jews would be allowed to return to rebuild their ruined nation
5. So **Jeremiah wrote a letter** to the exiles in Babylon, telling them they ought not expect a speedy return
6. He tells them what they ought to do instead . . .

B. Vs. 4-7

- 4 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:
- 5 Build houses and dwell *in them*; plant gardens and eat their fruit.
- 6 Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that

you may be increased there, and not diminished.

- 7 **And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.**
1. It seems **odd** for God to tell His people to settle down in pagan Babylon
 - a. Babylon was the *birthplace* of idolatry
 - b. it had a long history as the center of all things corrupt and evil
 - c. Babylon and Egypt had a long contest in claiming bragging rights to demonic power and occult activity
 2. So why would God tell His people to settle down in Babylon?
 3. The answer's simple – He had determined they would spend 70 years in exile there as judgment for their national sins
 4. But at the end of the 70 years, He promised to return them to their land, they would rebuild their cities and temple and renew their covenant with Him.
 5. The problem is, in 70 years, most if not all of the adults who had been originally deported from Judah would be **dead!**
 - a. they needed to settle down in Babylon --
 - b. build homes, start businesses, and raise families
 - c. they needed to ensure they had **children**, and that those children had children so there would *be* someone to make the return in 70 years.
 - d. they needed to start **businesses** that would provide the support their grandchildren would need to make the rather costly journey back to Judah
 6. Finally, God told them to **seek the peace of Babylon**
 - a. again, we might expect God telling them to seek Babylon's *judgment*, not peace
 - b. considering the wickedness of the city, knowing something of it's many perversions – we might expect something like what happened at Sodom and Gomorrah
 - c. so bad was the idolatry in Babylon, that when the Jews got there, it made them **sick!**
 - d. now, that's interesting when you realize that the reason the Jews were defeated by Babylon and deported in the first place was because of their idolatry
 - e. the Jews had worshipped Baal, and Asherah, and Molech and a dozen or so other deities, and for this they experienced the judgment of God
 - f. now in Babylon, their senses were assaulted by a culture wholly given over to idolatry
 - g. so repulsive was the immorality of the Babylonians, so utterly corrupt was their society, that it turned the stomach of the Jews
 - h. and there in Babylon they learned to loath idols – never again would they stumble with the worship of false gods
 7. So it comes as a bit of a shock to see God telling them to seek the peace of Babylon
 - a. they were to pray for peace
 - b. why? Because **in the peace of the land, they would have peace**
 - c. if there were turmoil and war, it would only hinder their new businesses and take the lives of their children

- d. so God calls His people to work and pray for the peace of Babylon – so that they may have peace and prosper in the land of their exile

C. Strangers & Foreigners

1. There's an **application** of this passage to our lives today
2. You see – you and I, as the followers of Christ, are *strangers* and *foreigners* in this world
 - a. in Hebrews 11: 13 we read that the life of faith makes us *pilgrims*
 - b. in Phil 3:20 we find that our citizenship is the Kingdom of God, not this world
 - c. 1 Peter 2:11 tells us we are sojourners here; as the old hippie slogan from the 60's said, "We're Just Passin' Thru."
3. Our real home is heaven; but our sojourn, our journey is **HERE**, on Planet Earth
 - a. while we aren't *of* the world, we are *in* the world
 - b. and while it's corruption and immorality distress us as the idolatry of Babylon distressed the Jews,
 - c. **HERE** is where God calls you and I to settle down, build homes, start businesses, raise families, and seek the peace of where we live
4. One day, Jesus Christ will break the power and dominion of evil that holds this world in thrall
5. One day, all those who are His will make an exodus out of this world to enjoy a glorious homecoming in heaven
6. But in the meantime – *here* is where we are
7. And what we are to be about is living out the hope and expectation of that day in these days

D. Settle Down

1. **God wants you and I to live full, productive lives**
 2. So what the Spirit inspired Jeremiah to write to God's people in Babylon,
 3. The Spirit is saying to God's people in modern Babylon!
 4. Settle down and use the resources God has given you to be productive
 5. Should the Lord's return be years away, God wants us to have a **heritage of good things** to pass on to our children
 6. He wants us to leave a **legacy of godliness!**
 7. Rather than squandering our lives and forcing our children to have to learn the same lessons all over again, God wants us to lay such a solid and firm foundation that our children can take the legacy of faith and godliness we have set down and build on it a testimony to God that is greater than you & I can imagine.
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8. Friends – it is no secret that our nation is at a crisis point
 - a. competing philosophies are vying for supremacy
 - b. the battle has come down to two great worldviews
 - 1) **Secular Humanism &**
 - 2) **Biblical Christianity**
 - c. we see that contest perfectly summed up in the whole debate over **Prop 22**
 9. The future of our nation rides on which ideology wins the debate

10. Gauging by the popular media and current elections, it seems the humanists have just about won the field
11. If they do, it won't be long before our nation falls to crash on the rocks of immorality and ruin
12. Who then will rebuild? Who will be left to pick up the pieces of a once great nation and repair the breach, build the wall, and re-set the gates?
13. It's our duty, to live productive lives for the glory and the purpose of God.
14. It's our duty to ensure that we are passing on a legacy of goodness and godliness to the next generation.

E. The Home Life

1. Applying this passage means this . . .
2. Building a house and raising a family *today* means that we need to be *purposeful* about our *family life* and the *stewardship of the children* the Lord entrusts to us
3. We ought to be diligent in the use of the financial resources the Lord gives us so that we don't shackle our children with a *bondage of debt*
4. Parents ought to work hard at making sure their marriage is a *model* of the way it's supposed to be so that their children grow up with an *ideal*, rather than an *ordeal!*

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. mom & dad, stop fighting in front of your children b. love one another and demonstrate it to them! c. dads – show tenderness and a warm concern for your wife d. moms – cheerfully defer to the God-ordained leadership of your husband

5. Build your house on the Rock of Jesus Christ and His Love and Truth
6. The way to do that is to make sure the Bible is the *Operating Manual* for everything your family does.
7. As I look out here this morning I see a lot of *single* people and people whose children are already grown
8. This passage applies with equal force to you
9. You see, besides your own personal family, God has called you to be a part of this family here at Calvary Chapel
 - a. *God is building a house and a family right here*
 - b. and we have hundreds of children, both physical and spiritual, who need *your* love and care
 - c. God wants to use this house, this family to lay a foundation of faith for the future
 - d. every single one of those classrooms is a call to stewardship
 - e. every single one of those little lives is a gift we can give to the future
10. Besides the children, God is also giving us many new believers who need to be discipled
11. Oh friends, when I think about what God has given us, is giving us, and will give us here at Calvary, *I get so excited I can't contain it!*
12. He wants us to be in the world, but not of it
 - a. we are in the world, but the world is not to be in us
 - b. just as the ship is to be in the water, but the water is not to be in the ship!

13. Here we are, in **Ventura County**. This is where God has called us to sojourn, to live while we wait for Him
14. We have a mission here! That mission is to live! To be productive. To create a legacy of faith which we purposefully, not accidentally, but with *purpose*, pass on to the next generation.
15. This is one of the reasons why I really enjoy the opportunity to lead the **High School** group right now
 - a. we hope to bring on a youth pastor by this Fall
 - b. but right now I really dig having the chance to spend some time with the teens
 - c. and let me tell you – God has given us some incredible young people
 - d. there are young men and women there who God is raising up to be the leaders of the church!

F. Seek Peace

1. There is one more thing God told the Jews in Babylon to do
2. ***Seek and pray for the peace of the land***
3. This same command is echoed in the NT by the Apostle Paul when he writes in 1 Timothy 2 . . .
 - 1 **I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men,**
 - 2 **for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**
 - 3 **For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,**
 - 4 **who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
4. What an important reminder as we face the elections this Tuesday!
5. We need to pray for our government officials!
6. What's remarkable is to realize that when Paul wrote this, the king, the emperor of Rome, was none other than the famous hater and murderer of Christians, **Nero!**
7. Still, the duty of the believer is to pray for the peace of the land
8. The reason why is because peace for the land means peace for the believer to pursue a life untroubled by violence and crime
9. Note well what God said to the exiles: v. 7 . . .
 - 7 **And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.**
10. They weren't only to pray for it, **they were to seek it**
 - a. they were to be **peacemakers**; finding ways to bring peace between those who were at odds
 - b. they were to **work** at ensuring peace would mark the land rather than strife
 - c. this meant where ever they had an opportunity to establish righteousness and represent truth, they were to do so
11. We too are to seek the peace of the land
 - a. we need to be informed on the issues and use the resource of our vote to

- work for what will bless, not curse our land
 - b. when ever we see people who are at odds, we ought to look for an opportunity to be a peacemaker.
 - c. Jesus said, “**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they should be called the Children of God.**”
12. Of course the greatest and most important peace that God’s people are to be concerned with, the peace that frames the base of peace for the land, is peace with God.
- a. as long as men and women are at odds with God they will be at odds with one another
 - b. so if we’re genuinely concerned with peace on earth, then our primary occupation will seek to bring men and women into reconciliation with God.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Our Focus*

1. As we now face another **president election**, the campaigns are heating up
2. This Tuesday is called **Super Tuesday** because several key states will hold their primaries
3. As I’m sure you’re all aware, there are some important ballot measures here in CA; they’re important because they are nothing less than **referendums on morality**
4. Even the candidates are playing the religion card in their campaigns and claiming to be more religious than one another
5. While it is indeed important to be a good steward with the vote God has given us, we need to realize that it is not in the political arena that the important work of social transformation will take place
6. It’s in the home that such change takes place; your home and my home
7. I will cast my ballot this week; I will study the candidates and issues, and then vote
8. But I am NOT putting my hope in that to change the direction of this land
9. No, I know that this land will change, one person at a time; as he or she is led to faith in Jesus Christ
10. So I will live my life here, in Ventura County, Oxnard, on Geranium Place with an aim to seeing others won to Christ
 - a. I will love my wife and raise my children so that the love and the power of my God is a testimony to the lost
 - b. I will work and shop and live with eyes open to the needs of those around me
 - c. and then I will share the truth that God loves them and offers them eternal life through faith in Jesus

B. *Sojourners Here*

1. We must never forget, that we are pilgrims, sojourners here
2. This world is not our home – but it is where we are
3. And while we are here – We are to be **HERE** living the life of faith!