**Objective:** Encourage people with truth that God’s desire is to do good for them if they will but cooperate.

**Scripture Reading:** Jeremiah 29:10-14.

**Memory Verse:** Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

**Introduction:**
1. Sometimes we wonder why there are so many difficult things in this life. If there is a loving God, how can such difficult things happen?
2. God does not hesitate to do hard things to people when there is a reason for it. Sometimes it is punishment that is deserved. Sometimes it is discipline to open people’s eyes, get their attention. A wake-up call.
3. Even in the midst of the hardest of times, God makes it clear that His ultimate and earnest desire is to bless people. Even in the hardest times we should have faith, we should accept His discipline, we should accept His efforts and intentions for our spiritual growth or discipline. Whatever is happening, We should seek God’s blessing. (HOW?)

In Jeremiah 29:10-14, God tells the people, through the prophet, Jeremiah, **HOW people should respond in the face of hard times, in order to receive God’s intended blessing** upon them.

A first order of business, is always to

I. Patiently endure your “exile”.

A. Be faithful and true even in hardships. (Your “exile” from peace and comfort)
   1. He is still your God and your Lord.
   2. Who knows what things go on in heavenly realms that we are a part of?
   3. **Job 2:10**, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”
   4. We are hear to serve—always—not just in the good times!
   5. This is the lesson Solomon also learned; **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**, “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ’For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”

B. Faithful and true in behavior.
   1. With patient endurance; Here it will not happen until the seventy years are completed.
   2. Bring Him honor. Wherever we are, whatever is going on, our role is to bring Him honor and glory. Remember Joseph in prison? Remember Paul and Silas sitting in a dungeon? Remember Jesus in His trial, scourging and crucifixion!
   3. Without complaining about “captors”. Rather, influence them with your godly character!
   4. God urges them to pray for their oppressors; **Jeremiah 29:7**, “Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”
   5. Principle applies today; **Luke 6:27-28**, “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” Here is something we can and must be doing. Don’t like this world but we live in it.

C. Even hard times are intended for our benefit.
   1. Even in hard times, God still desires good for you, not evil. This is His nature and heart!
   2. **Jeremiah 29:11**, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”
   3. They are for discipline, for spiritual and character development. May even be for “punishment”
   4. **2 Peter 3:9**, “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Sometimes it requires and “exile” to bring us to our senses. Like the Prodigal Son. We need to hit bottom before we think to look up!

*Whenever called upon to suffer and endure, one thing we should always know to do, is to*
II. Call upon the name of the Lord.
A. Call upon God in prayer.
   1. Ask Him to fulfill His desires. Ask Him what is needed from us so He can fulfill His desire; Which is; Jeremiah 29:11. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”
   2. Concept is frequent throughout Scripture. First is probably in Genesis 4:25-26. “Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” 26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.” People generally drift from God until trouble besets them, then they call on His name for help, guidance,
   3. Call for help. Call for guidance and direction. Call for leadership. Call for wisdom and understanding.
   4. Are you calling on His name? Do you really want to know God – or do you really want to just be left alone?
B. Match your words with your behavior.
   1. With patient endurance; Here it will not happen until the seventy years are completed.
   2. One cannot ask for help while doing things that are abominable and detestable to Him.
   3. Calling on His name involves learning about Him. What is His nature and character. What sort of people do we need to be what sort of lives do we need to live to be such that His Presence can abide with us???
   4. Are we alien sinners looking for help, or are we seeking to be His friends, His children, His priests? Seeking to live in such a way that He can abide with us and live IN us as if we are a temple to His Holy Spirit?!!!
C. Calling on God means entrusting ourselves to Him.
   1. New Testament concept; 2 Timothy 1:12, “That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.”
   2. Romans 10:11-13, “As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
   3. Infers earnest prayer. Infers earnest behavior.
   4. Employs baptism for those who have not yet been baptized; Acts 22:16, “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.” A giving, submitting of oneself to Him. For help that only He can give.

To enable God to prosper us as He really would like to do means that we must

III. Seek God.
A. With all of our heart.
   1. “Seek” means to try to understand. To have a relationship. To find a friend in Jesus.
   2. To understand; what is it that God wants of me? What is He looking for? What is necessary to have a “friend” relationship with God?
   3. This cannot be a half-hearted thing. Genuine. Sincere. Be real about it!
   4. I must be doing introspection to see what is detestable to God in my current life.
   5. I have got to genuinely repent of those things if I want His help!
   6. Those who returned from the Exile were “cleaned” they left a lot of false garbage in Babylon.
B. Let no one deceive you.
   1. Jeremiah 29:8-9, “Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. 9 They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the LORD.”
2. Some will try to do this though God has not sent them. But it will sound good to you! Messages of peace and prosperity even when folks are opposing God and living rebelliously.

3. Do not let astray by fine-sounding arguments. Colossians 2:4, “I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.”

4. Look for truth in spirit and in words. Hold to truth. Hold to the Word of God. Even when it seems harsh to you and other venues seem preferable ways out. Even when you would really rather hear something else, when you would really rather something else be true.

5. Remember, even in the “hard” things, God has you “good” in mind for you. It may take the long run instead of immediate gratification. Trust Him! That is “faith” by definition.

C. Keep looking for truth.

1. 2 Timothy 4:3-5, “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” We want our ears “tickled” also. That is natural – but not good. Normal, but dangerous.

2. Be careful to listen for Truth, not to be attracted to those who say what you want to hear!

3. God repeatedly tried to tell the Israelites Truth, but they would not listen. Jeremiah 29:19, “For they have not listened to my words,” declares the LORD, “words that I sent to them again and again by my servants the prophets. And you exiles have not listened either,” declares the LORD.” They wanted to hear what they wanted to hear and encouraged “prophets” to tell them what they wanted to hear. Hold out for the truth.

So What?

Life is full of difficult times. Use them wisely. When they come, call upon the name of the Lord, and earnestly seek Him. God is there, watching and wanting to bless you through all these things.

We have but to pay attention and cooperate. Call upon God and seek God. He has good plans for us.

Closing Prayer:
God’s Plans For Us
Jeremiah 29:10-14

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 29:10-14
Memory Verse: Jeremiah 29:11

“We should seek God’s blessing.”

How to receive God’s intended blessing.

I. Patiently endure your “exile.”
A. Be faithful and true even in hardships.
   Job 2:10   Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

B. Faithful and true in behavior.

C. Even hard times are intended for our benefit.
   Jeremiah 29:11   2 Peter 3:9

II. Call upon the name of the Lord.
A. Call upon God in prayer.
   Jeremiah 29:11   Genesis 4:25-26

B. Match your words with your behavior.

C. Calling on God means entrusting ourselves to Him.
   2 Timothy 1:12   Romans 10:11-13   Acts 22:16

III. Seek God.
A. With all of our heart.

B. Let no one deceive you.
   Jeremiah 29:8-9   Colossians 2:4

C. Keep looking for truth.
   2 Timothy 4:3-5   Jeremiah 29:19

So What?:
Call upon God and seek God. He has good plans for us.