

James T. Jeremiah
Our Times Are in God's Hands
November 3, 1980

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

It's great to be back home. I've been wandering around the eastern part of this country for the last seven or eight weeks. I've met some of your pastors and your parents. I have been the postal service to bring home care packages. I had one package given to me when I was in Virginia. I took it all the way from Virginia to Ottawa, Ontario, back home again. I'm not sure I would have known what to do if customs had asked me to open it, but I got through without customs asking too many questions and so I hope it all came in time.

James T. Jeremiah:

We appreciate your prayers for us as we've been out in these meetings. It's been a great experience and we thank God for the friends we have out in the churches for many of your friends, your parents, and your churches. Now, this morning, I'd like to have you open your Bibles to the 31st Psalm. We want to take a verse out of that in a minute. We appreciate the fellowship we have with president Dixon. I noticed how quickly he got out of the responsibility of the losing team. I wonder what his attitude would have been if they had won and he would have been happy. And so would all of us, they have won some, especially against Pittsburgh and that's encouraging.

James T. Jeremiah:

Let's have prayer together. Our father, we're glad for this hour, for the time we have together around the word of God. We pray that the holy spirit will take the passage of scripture today that we're going to think about and help us to see the truth that will encourage our hearts in these days in which we live. Thank you for the students, the staff, faculty, administration of this college. We pray thy blessing, lord, rest upon us, as we serve together. In Jesus' name, amen. Now, tomorrow, if you haven't already by absentee ballot, you're going to vote. And some of us, I presume, in this great congregation of academics are persuaded that if the vote does not go the way we think it ought to, the end of time is at hand. Some of us can look back over a few years and it's nice to be old enough to do that.

James T. Jeremiah:

It has its disadvantages. You don't have many years to do that, but we can look back over the days where the Roosevelt regime that we had one president for so long that we wondered if we'd ever get another one. And during those days we discovered that there were many things that were going wrong. As some folks thought. It's amazing how many of the things that went wrong became right and so many people who thought they were wrong or practicing the wrong things as right things. That'll take a little time for you to figure that one out, but you will after a while. I realized that we ought to be concerned about this and we ought to vote. If you are here and haven't planned to do so, and you can, I trust you will. Vote your convictions. We are responsible as American citizens to do that, but I'm looking forward to something better than catastrophe, at the end of this age.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm looking forward to the coming of the Lord. And no matter what happens, so far as man's deeds are concerned, God is going to be the victor. One day, the son of God will come out of heaven and come as the king of kings and the lord of lords and will establish his kingdom upon the throne of his father, David,

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and there will be a rule of righteousness and peace and honesty and decency, and I'm looking forward to that day, when that shall happen on this earth. As I was thinking about this, I also was reminded of the fact that the next calamity that college students would be facing would be the midterms. And I know something of the agony of that and some of you fretted it already, some of you are through with it and some of you have been made through with it, I suppose, I'm not sure. But you wonder what all the trials are about. And thinking about this matter, I couldn't help but be reminded of a verse of scripture that came to mind found in the 31st Psalm.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's out of a picture of despair, but it comes out with a great deal of confidence in verse 15. The psalmist said, "My times are in thy hand." Here's a great encouragement for difficult times. The Psalm says, the believers experiences are not always on the mountaintop. There is a kind of Christianity that tells us that if you're not always on the mountaintop and have no depressions and difficulties in your life, then you are living the kind of spiritual life you ought to have. But here is a picture of a person who is facing difficulties, ups and downs, and trials. Notice, for example, the contrast in verses two and four, where the writer of the Psalm says my strong rock. And then in verse four, he says, pull me out of the net. One side in his conviction is God is the strong rock.

James T. Jeremiah:

The next cry he makes, pull me out of the net. In verses five and seven, thou hast redeemed me. Then in verse seven, my soul is in adversity. Verse nine, he speaks of trouble and grief. And in verse 14, he said, I trusted in thy name. Someone has said that this Psalm is like an April day with the sunshine and the rain, refers to the beautiful, uncertain weather where gloom and glory meet together. I suppose the beautiful uncertain weather could best be described by the Cedarville weather. Fortunate, we have sunshine today, but give us a little time, it will go and we'll have snow and we'll have cold weather and we'll have rain. But you see the beautiful weather involves all of it for all of it's needed. In the Psalm, the Psalmist deals with these problems. The interesting thing about it to me is that it starts and ends well.

James T. Jeremiah:

The psalmist said, in thee, oh Lord, do I put my trust. Let me never be ashamed, deliver me in Thy righteousness. Be of good courage and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the lord. It is a Psalm where the writer complains of his enemies. The unmerciful persecution that comes against him. Reminds us somewhat of the old Testament, prophet, Jeremiah, where you'll read three or four times, that fear was on every side. And the Psalmist refers to that same thing, in verse 13. He also said in verse 12, I'm like a broken vessel. And the prophet of God in his trials preaching his message of doom to the Southern kingdom of Judah, before the destruction of the land by Nebuchadnezzar is speaking about the same thing. There was a man by the name of Pashhur that Jeremiah named Magormissabib.

James T. Jeremiah:

That's a nice name. And his name means terror on every side. And here is a picture of the same thing. Here's a child of God, surrounded by difficulties and trials and problems and disappointments, but out of it all, he cries, "my times are in thy hands." Man said the Psalm could be titled the distress of the innocent. Now the Psalmist in another place, Psalm 119, that long passage of scripture. Verse 109 says, my soul is continually in my hand. Now I'd rather have it said that my times and my soul and my life is in

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the hand of the Lord. Our times are not in our hands, the hands of our enemies or the hands of our friends, but in his hands.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now this little phrase in Psalm 31 teaches me three important doctrines that I want to leave with you. I want to talk with you about the sovereignty of the savior in this passage, oh Lord Jehovah, my God. So we find in verse 14, I want you to see this. It's not a fatalistic outlook on life. The Psalmist views in verse 14, with Jehovah, Jehovah the self-existent one. The name of the Redeemer in the old Testament. I trusted in thee, my Redeemer, oh Lord Jehovah. I said, thou art, my God, thou art the strong one in my life.

James T. Jeremiah:

My times are in thy hands and over and over again, the Psalmist and the prophets and the new Testament emphasizes the greatness and the strength and the sovereignty of our almighty God. Now, Providence, not mentioned in the Bible as such, like the Trinity and some other subjects are not mentioned that name, but the doctrine is there. Providence is God's gracious outworking of his purpose in Christ, which issues in his dealings with man, this doctrine tells us that the world and our lives are not ruled by chance or by fate, but by God. Lays bare his purpose of Providence and the incarnation of his son.

James T. Jeremiah:

Let's never gear our theology in any direction that does not center in his son. Even in this Old Testament passage, Jehovah, the savior is the one in whose hands we find ourselves. And all of this is geared and keyed to what God, the father, is doing through Jesus Christ, the son. Let me read familiar scriptures to you out of Ephesians. Ephesians chapter one and verses 10 and 11. Now that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, and verse 22, and hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.

James T. Jeremiah:

We are not Unitarians. We're Trinitarians. We believe that Jesus Christ is the center and the source and the substance of all that's involved in God's care for his people. We are in his hands. I remember reading about a little boy, could have well been one of my grandsons, I suppose, because I've got a couple like this one, he found a clock and he heard it tick and he wanted to find out what the tick was all about and so he took it apart. And when he got it apart, he tried to put it back together again, and he had more wheels and springs and pinions and all the rest then he needed it. He could have made two clocks. He discovered to his amazement, as you have discovered, when you were a little boy or a little girl and took a clock apart that some of the wheels go one way and some go the other way, there is a great main spring and a hairspring and they all have their place, but wheels do not always turn the same way, some backward and some forward, but it makes the clock tick.

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And it's great to know, friends, that when you can't understand the way the wheels turn and the way the gears go, the way the spring is in there. In the way of life, there is a God who controls the forward and the backward motion of the springs and the wheels in your life so that he does not lead you astray, but your times are in his hands. That's the Providence of it. All of this fits into history. Back in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel, the word of God says that an angel came to Nebuchadnezzar in verse 17. And he said the most high rulers in the kingdom of men, and he giveth it to whomsoever he will and setteth over it the basest of men, the angel to Nebuchadnezzar. I suppose the old boy listened to it for a while and thought, well, that may be, may not be. Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar in verse 25, the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

James T. Jeremiah:

He should have learned his lesson, but a voice from heaven came to Nebuchadnezzar in verse 32. They shall make thee to eat grass until thou know the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and give it to whomsoever he will. Finally, after a voice from heaven and the message of the prophet and an angel from glory. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar confessed in verse 35, all the inhabitants of earth are reputed as nothing. And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. It took him a long time to learn that. But one thing he learned that God puts on the throne, whomsoever he will, and the Proverbs adds to it that like the rivers of water, he turneth the King's heart withersoever he will and in the book of Acts, when he deals with a crucifixion, he does whatsoever he will.

James T. Jeremiah:

So if you get the whomsoever and the whithersoever and the whatsoever in its right place, you will see the hand of God in history. Yes and we see it in prophetic fulfillment. Caesar Augustus was on the throne in Rome for the sake of an unknown baby in a manger in Bethlehem. God predicted Christ would come. He came precisely as he predicted he would come. The Bible is filled with illustrations about the prediction of cities to being destroyed, Memphis wiped out. So that today, all that you'll find there, a few broken stones, Nineveh so destroyed in answer to the prophetic scriptures that when the scripture was given, it was a great city, but so completely destroyed that when, when Alexander the Great came, he didn't even mention it because it was all overgrown with brush and covered with dirt. Babylon destroyed so that it hasn't been rebuilt. City after city, nation after nation, all pointing out that when God's plan is in operation, he fulfills his purpose.

James T. Jeremiah:

And it's great to know that when he fulfills his purpose in relation to nations and the Kings, that those of us little people that we are here in this great world, with all the troubles that surround us and with all the difficulties that we can't understand, we have a God who says your times are in my hands. I take great counsel in that and great comfort in that. But let me also remind you again, that it all fits into the redemptive program of Jesus Christ. And there is nothing that God does without making us responsible. Also, he is one of the great marks of his sovereignty is sovereignly making us responsible. Let's never forget that and get this twisted out of line and out of shape.

James T. Jeremiah:

So you have in this little line, my times are in my hands, the sovereignty of the savior. I like to think of it also as a reference to the security of the redeemed. My time, my years, my months, my days, my hours,

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my minutes, my problems, my difficulties, my joy, are in his hands. What are the conditions of all of this? Well, in verse seven, he talks about trouble, adversities. Verse 10, grief, sighing. My strength is failing. Verse 12, I'm forgotten. Sound natural? It sound like you might feel some time? Maybe today? Maybe something happened to you in your life and you feel forsaken and forgotten and unloved and unwanted and all the rest. And well, there are those that have had that experience.

James T. Jeremiah:

The Psalmist had that. Conditions do not change the fact of God's truth. Conditions in which we find ourselves do not change the fact that we're still in his hands. Sometimes the adverse circumstances can lead to glory, many times. High school student went out in his athletic contest or in a game or practice of some kind broke his nose. Now a broken nose is not, not generally fatal, probably painful. They sent him to the clinic to get it fixed up. And I suppose it was late in the day or else he thought it might be a way of escaping some of the responsibilities of many more classes.

James T. Jeremiah:

So instead of going back to school, he went across the street. This was in New York city, went across the street to the Bronx zoo. As he walked into the zoo, the camera's began to flash. Excitement was here. He couldn't understand it all. And finally discovered that he was the 1 million person to come to the zoo and they were making a special effort to advertise the zoo and so in spite of the fact that he thought he could escape. He got caught, but you see the broken nose led to a blaze of glory. So maybe, maybe the thing that you think is going to be the adversity. And I think will be the difficulty, the problem that we can't overcome in the hands of God.

James T. Jeremiah:

Maybe the thing, maybe the very thing that God's going to use in his hands to bring to us the thing that joy that we didn't expect. Now to think about this also in dealing with this matter of the security of the believer in all of this, the psalmist tells us who the Lord is. Some of it is some of his attributes,, he's righteous in verse one. Merciful in verse seven. Good in verse 21. Kind in verse 19. Kind in verse 21. Nine says of the prophet again, when he said it is of the Lord's mercies, that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not great is thy faithfulness and the God who takes care of us, God in whose hands we rest, whose hands we are, is a God who is good, and a God who is righteous, and a God who is merciful.

James T. Jeremiah:

A God who is gracious, God doesn't make any mistakes. Doesn't make any errors. He doesn't lead us in a wrong pathway. Sometimes we mistake his leading and sometimes we rebel against his leading. We don't, we like the idea of being in his hands with the security of it. We don't like the idea of being in his hands for the restrictions of it, but God's hands restrain and restrict, as well as bless. And where there's the believer, He said, in thy hands. Oh, you say that's easy. I get in the hands of God. I don't have to stay there. But the prophet of God in the old Testament, Isaiah 49: 16 said, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. That's interesting. Why didn't he put us on the back of his hands? Why didn't he engrave us on the fingers of his hands?

James T. Jeremiah:

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Why didn't he just write us with a little crayon on his hand? Inscribed in the palms of his hands and whenever God raises his fist against our enemies, we're in the palm of his hand. Wonderful to have that assurance in the troubles of our days. He didn't put us on the backs of the fingers, but in the palms of our hands and so inscribed us there that were there to stay. And I like to think that the instrument that inscribed us on the palms of his hands were the nails that led his son to the cross. I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. The life that I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the son of God who loved me, gave himself for me.

James T. Jeremiah:

What is the promise to all of this? Let's look at verse 20. If we are to be in his hands, the promise in verse 20 helps us, too. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence. The secret of thy presence. The enemy can never find the secret of his presence. Thank God for the assurance. Your times are in his hands. Thank God for the assurance that you're in the secret of his presence. God has a special place for his people in caring for them. Hebrews 13, five to six reminds us that he'll never leave us nor forsake us. The security of the redeemed.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, let me close with a third thing out of this text that I'd like to leave with you. The submission of the believer, the sovereignty of the savior, the security of the believer, and the submission of the believer. My times are in thy hands. So if that's true, and it is, the wise thing to do is to submit to him.

James T. Jeremiah:

In other words, if the Bible is true, that my times, my days, my hours, my life are in his hand. Then the wise thing to do is to submit to that one who controls time and events and actions that have somewhat to do with me. God said in James four, six to seven, God resists the proud, giveth grace unto the humble. And he tells us to submit to God, resist the devil, and he'll flee from us. Submission. Our hands are not in the hands of a great man who controls part of things, not in the hands of a government that controls our lives. Our hands are in his hands, and out of this, the believer in the Psalm in verses 15 and 16 petitions God. When we know he is sovereign

James T. Jeremiah:

we will come to him as the only way of rescue. Notice what he said. My times are in thy hands, deliver me, make me face, make thy face to shine upon thy servant. Let me not be ashamed. Out of this confidence comes his petition. Leads us to trust him. Twice in the Psalm, verses 6 and 14. You said, I trust in thee. Dan Crawford, a missionary to Africa, said that this passage of scripture that we just read verse 15, could be translated like this. All my life's whys and wheres and whens and wherefores are in the Lord's hand.

James T. Jeremiah:

Good thing to know. My life's whys and whens, wherefores, wherefores are in his hands. Out of this matter of submission comes the element of obedience. Verse five, even in the midst of all of these contrasting feelings that this man who wrote the song has, he said, into thine hand, I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, oh Lord, God of truth. The very words used by the Lord Jesus Christ, as he hung on a cross to take our place, where the burden of the world's sin upon him bearing our sin in his

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own body on the tree with his father's face turned away into thy hand, I commit commend my spirit. If that was true of the Lord Jesus in the midst of the cross, midst of difficulties, how true it ought to be of us when perplexities and difficulties and disappointments come to be able to say, into your hand, I commend my spirit. I don't see anything contrary, anything opposing another thing to know that my God is one who has me in his hands. By the way, he has the nations in his hand, I am so confident that our God still runs the business. I am so glad that from his throne, he knows what's going on and controls it. That doesn't eliminate our responsibility for obedience, soul winning, serving.

James T. Jeremiah:

God help us if we get the concept that God, because he's sovereign, is going to do it all and leaves us with no responsibility. God doesn't teach that. I don't know who it was that did this or said this, but some young man who was overly endowed with a wrong attitude of God's overruling of the affairs of men said to a Bible teacher "I am so confident that God rules in my life, I could go out here in this highway, by which we're standing, and see one of those great big semis coming down here fast as it can come with a load of gravel on it. And I could step in front of it, and if it wasn't God's will, I would live." Bible teacher said, friend, if you stand here and see that big truck coming down with that load of gravel going 60 miles an hour, and you stand out in front of it, it will be God's will that you die. Let's not be ridiculous, but I have met a few people in my day who are just about that ridiculous.

James T. Jeremiah:

My times are in his hand. Great to know that, young people, that our times are in his hands, and as a result, his hands have a perfect legitimate right to direct us what we're to do in the service of the Lord Jesus, and primarily he requires of us not greatness, not essentially success, but he does require simple, dedicated obedience. May God help us to be that kind of Christian. Dear Lord, speak to our hearts today, comfort and help and strengthen where we need it. In Christ's name. Amen.

Paul H. Dixon:

Thank you, Dr. Jeremiah, that's a good word for the election tomorrow for our lives. Let's again continue to pray for the election day tomorrow. God bless you.