

James T. Jeremiah  
This I Know  
February 27, 1989

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Thank you, Kirk, that brings back many memories to me, because when I was first saved quite a few years ago, that was one of the songs that people would sing a great deal. I know what's possible for every one of us in this audience this morning to be able to say it is well with my soul. That is not to say that everybody in the audience can say it. I hope you can by the grace of God.

James T. Jeremiah:

Dr. Dixon has made several announcements through the weeks about my wife and her illness, and he asked me to speak this morning in chapel and try to give to you some of the lessons we've learned through this time of testing. This is not the easiest message I've ever given, but I want to do it for two reasons. I believe first of all, it can honor the Lord by declaring what God does for us, and because I know that in this student body, there are many who have problems. Maybe we can be some encouragement. If we can, we will be grateful.

James T. Jeremiah:

First of all, I want to express a word of thanks to all of you who have shown so much concern. You recall that on one occasion, Dr. Dixon said that the chancellor ought to get a hug. I'm the only man I'm sure that ever walked across this platform who had a personal, public, presidential pronouncement of such rare privilege. And I'm grateful. I've had hugs literally, and I've had good money from letters and cards and kind words.

James T. Jeremiah:

I don't think you can understand unless you faced a problem like this, how much that means and encouraging along the way. I'd like to just give you a little bit of background about our lives together. My wife and I went to Baptist Bible Seminary, now Baptist Bible College in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. When we graduated, they moved it and changed the name. I don't know why, but they did. And she was the Vice President. I was the President of a class of ten, crowded out with people. And we graduated in 1936. We were married on October the first, 1936. It's amazing thing that the marriage has lasted almost 53 years. I suppose you'll say, "Well, if I was married to a guy like that, it must have been a miracle." But we didn't even know what premarital counseling was. We didn't have any. We weren't married in the church, but in my wife's farm home in Springville, Pennsylvania. We didn't have a honeymoon. The next day we started for our first church in Panama, New York. She was 21. I was 22.

James T. Jeremiah:

In order to make that young age seem even more ridiculous, when we came to the home we were to stay, we knocked at the Eddy home in that little town. An old man on crutches came hobbling to the door and with a aged voice said, "Come on in, elder." And my wife looked at me and I guess wondered how she ever got married to that old fellow. But you have to remember that in days gone by, the pastor of a Baptist church was called elder, and that's scriptural as well as pastor. So he was all right.

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Through the years, I have memories of my wife's godly life. I remember her saying one day, "My life verse is found in Psalm 116." This is what it says: "I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications, because He has inclined His ear to me. Therefore, will I call upon Him as long as I live." Many years ago in her Bible, she placed a poem, and I was going through that Bible some time ago and I found it pretty well worn. And I decided it would be something that I could find that encouraged me and I know it will be to you. Elaine Howard, the pastor's secretary at Grace Baptist Church, took the poem and made a plaque out of it and it's up here on the platform and after the chapel, if somebody would like to see the artwork she did, we'd like to have you look at it. But it's been suggested that I put it on the screen and read it for you. So you look at it while I read it.

James T. Jeremiah:

"I know not where tomorrow's road may point my pilgrim way. I may not taste its joy or care nor see beyond today. But this I know, my Father plans the path I cannot see. He knows each turn, each hill, each dale, and He will walk with me.

James T. Jeremiah:

"I know not if my way may be bright or dark with storm and rain. I know not what it holds for me or pleasure or pain. But this I know, my Savior's love repairs, my path each day and held within His mighty hand I need not fear the way.

James T. Jeremiah:

"I know not what the future holds or what lies life's evening brings. But with the glad salute of faith, I hail its opening wings. For this I know, in God the Lord shall all my needs be met. I'll trust tomorrow to His love who has not failed me yet."

James T. Jeremiah:

That speaks to me of peace, confidence in the Lord. And it brings great comfort. She is today in Wood Glen nursing center, seemingly getting along well. We try to see her a couple of times a week, take her to lunch so she can have a taste of Bob Evans pancakes which she loves. And we're just grateful for the way God is helping and the way people respond.

James T. Jeremiah:

I think probably one of the most difficult things in this testing so far as I'm concerned is loneliness. We've lived together almost 53 years. The first time in my 75 years that I've been alone. God is there. Aren't you glad He doesn't forsake you and leave you? I'm reminded of that so often. Somebody says, "Who does your cooking?" I do, and no laugh at that. I'm prepared well for cooking. I took a year of chemistry in high school. And up to this moment, there have been no explosions with the exception of an egg in a microwave oven. And we recovered it.

James T. Jeremiah:

As far as I know, my wife in her illness is not suffering physically. And I'm grateful. This has been coming for a long time. Back in 1956 at our 50th anniversary, we went to Hawaii and it was a great time in many ways, but I was aware then she wasn't getting a great deal out of it from the standpoint of seeing the scenery and traveling around. But she went and she was content and we had a good time together. Only

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in the last three months, I would say, has there been a definite diagnosis of her problem, which has been declared Alzheimer's disease.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now the thing that I want to spend time with today is what can we learn? What does God do when we are faced with testing, with sorrow, separation, disappointment? And students I think we ought to recognize the fact that you don't have to be 75 to find testings. They're all through life. I want you to open your Bibles to the 42nd and 43rd Psalm. We won't be giving a study on that, but I'll be mentioning it on several occasions, as through these days, I have been reading the Psalms because they speak of personal experience with the Lord. And many of the writers of the Psalms went through trials and testings beyond anything that any of us have ever had. And let me just mention this to you. And speaking of this, I am aware of the fact that there are hundreds of people, that trials beyond anything I can know. The other day in Grand Rapids, a man came up to talk to me, asked how my wife was, and I tried to tell him. And he said, "We had a son, 25 years of age, who committed suicide." That broke my heart when I heard that.

James T. Jeremiah:

Another time I was in a restaurant talking to a lady who said, "My husband's been in the care center for 20 years." She was responsible to bring up the family. We can always find something when we have no shoes, as the saying goes, we'll run into somebody that has no feet. We ought to think about that. I think the question I like to bring to you first is, do all Christians suffer? Job said that man is born in trouble, as surely as sparks fly upwards. That's about as certain as it can get. The unbearable is destined to be the inescapable. I Corinthians 10:13, no temptation or testing has taken you except such as is common to man. God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tested or tempted above that you're able, but will with a testing make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it.

James T. Jeremiah:

I remember reading some time ago that Peter wrote, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trials that try you." I thought that's something. But when I read James, I found that James said something even more difficult. "Count it all joy when you fall into diverse trials." Do all Christians suffer? Yes. Somewhere, some way, somehow. Hebrews 12:7-8 says that "God deals with you as with sons. Without chastening, you are illegitimate and not sons." You can always find, as I mentioned, somebody who's going through a worse time than you. Every one of us must learn to cooperate with the inevitable. There are some things we can't change. And we better find God's leading as we go along through life facing these situations.

James T. Jeremiah:

Next question. Is it a sign of weakness when Christians weep? I think Dr. Dixon referred to this the other day when he talked about it, a sign of greatness if you don't. But I have news for you. You begin life crying, because if you couldn't cry when the doctor delivered you at birth, you wouldn't be here. So that's just the beginning. I think about the Lord Jesus, who wept once over the city of Jerusalem, according to the record. He wept another time at Lazarus' tomb, because He loved Lazarus. The word of God reminds us that God has a bottle for our tears, a wineskin for our tears. In New Testament, there was a woman, a wicked woman who came to Jesus and washed His feet with her tears.

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The word of God says, God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. Twice that's said in Revelation. It's going to be difficult if anybody stands there who have no tears to wipe away. But I have news for you. It is impossible according to the teaching of the scripture that anybody who is a Christian will stand there without having some experience of tears. Say, "Did you cry?" Yes. But I know a day He will wipe away the tears. And that's not a guess. That's not a philosophical supposition. It's a Biblical statement with a promise backed by God Himself.

James T. Jeremiah:

Another thing that we might ask, is it wrong for Christians to ask why? You look at this Psalm 42 or 43, which is actually one Psalm. Ten times he asked the question, why? Well, he wasn't where he wanted to be. He was up in the northern part of Israel apparently and he wanted to be in the temple. That's a pretty good thing. He wanted to be nearer God. He didn't feel how he wanted to feel. There was no joy in his heart. And so he asked why. He couldn't find answers to his questions. There were not only why, but where and when in the text. Now if we ask God why, so we can understand His purpose and not complain to Him, there's some reason why we could ask it. We ought not really to ask, "why me?" We should ask, ""why not me? Question ought to be, "if I haven't faced any testing, why haven't I?"

James T. Jeremiah:

I think it was Warren Wiersbe who wrote in one of his books that you can't change the circumstances by changing your location. Won't cure depression. Here the psalmist was surrounded with creative things, the Jordan River or Mount Hermon, the waterfalls. The Bible doesn't say that there is help in the creation, but there is comfort in knowing the faithful Creator. And I Peter 4:19, here the psalmist saw God's creation, but he looked beyond that and saw God the Creator.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now let me ask you another question. Is God in control when His people go through trying times? Is He really? The writer of Psalm 145 began his writing by saying, "I will praise you my God, oh, King." Take time out of your busy schedule and read the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel and see who runs the business. Read I Chronicles 29:11-12, that we haven't time to read today that shows that God is sovereign. God runs His own business. We make a personal decision to be saved and commit our lives to Jesus Christ. And if we're honest and trust Him as we ought to, we'll know that He runs the business from there on out. We are His. We're bought with a price, the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. "My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord," said the psalmist, 145, "forever and ever." Job wrote, it's recorded in Job in 22:13, "He is unique and who can make Him change. Whatever His soul desires, that He does." What He wants to do, He does. When He wants to do it, He does it. How He wants to do it, that's His business. Why He wants to do it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Remember, sometimes we can quote Romans 8:28 to excuse a lot of things. I've heard people hold it to cover up their stupidity, stupidity. "All things work together for good." That isn't all that's involved in it. In fact, that doesn't cover up our crazy actions, wrong turns. It says all, we know, all things work together for good to those who love God, whom He foreknew He predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. The good things that He does in our lives, whether they seem good or bad to us, are there that we might be conformed to the image of His Son.

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Another question that has come to me over the years and particularly the last few days, does God really have a purpose in our times of testing? Well, you read the book and you'll find He does. First of all, I think He wants us to know Him better. Dr. Swindoll wrote, "we are created to need Him." We are created to need Him. We can know His strength. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Then God brings us through times of trial, we might know Him a little better. We can get so self-confident, so carried away with our own abilities, we leave God outside our planning and we become as layman. Strauss says, practical atheist. He is in all our thoughts. God has a way to bring us back.

James T. Jeremiah:

Another thing: that we might come to the end of ourselves. You'll want to read II Corinthians 1 if you're going through trial, it'll help you. In the ninth verse it says that "we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raised the dead." When you face a situation you can't change, you can't trust yourself to change it because it's inescapable.

James T. Jeremiah:

Another reason: that we might be disciplined for a more godly walk. God has a place in Hebrews 12:10, it says He does it for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness, the trials, knowing better.

James T. Jeremiah:

What should the believer do in the midst of all of this? Well, we're supposed to do something that isn't easy. And by the grace of God, we can do it. We can praise the Lord through it all. Psalm 42:11, the psalmist speaks about his soul being cast down, disquieted within him. But he said, "I shall yet praise Him, the help, or the salvation, of my countenance, my God." Back in the Psalm we began with 116 verse 12, "How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me?" The psalmist responds that he will call on the Lord, pay his vows, submit to God, be a slave. Supplication, submission, service.

James T. Jeremiah:

I want to say to you how thankful to God I am today. I could have been on the road to hell or maybe there by now, but by His grace I'm not. Through the interest of a friend and a godly Sunday school teacher, I was led to Christ through reading the Gospel of John. I thank God for that. I think of the opportunities God has given me to serve, and they beyond anything I can really understand. Of course, I'm grateful for my people. Wife, Ruby who's been with me all through these years and helped, encouraged. I think of all of the opportunities God has given. I'm thankful. I have no reason to be anything else but that.

James T. Jeremiah:

I think another thing that God wants us to do when we go through testing is testify of His grace, give a message. Psalm 145 writes that he would "declare Your mighty acts. Speak of the might of Your awesome acts." He goes on and names a number of things. Keep talking about the Lord, preaching it more, not less. As you may know, Ruby is unable to communicate sometimes. She sometimes has difficulty finishing a sentence. Talks about things that I can't understand. But as though God would give me a message and give her a bit of enlightenment along the way, as we were riding along one day, out of what might be a clear blue sky, she said, "God has called you. Don't you quit." That's the last she said that I could understand for a while. "God has called you. Don't you quit."

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I think one of the things that we could do probably better is have a broken heart to people to comfort the suffering. That's what we read in II Corinthians 1:4. Comfort those that have needs.

James T. Jeremiah:

Let me close by just one more question. How can we face the future? In Psalm 42 and 43, three times it says hope in God. That's how we face the future. It's unknown, we can't trace it. You don't know where you will be next week. God does. We have hope in Him. Back in the book of Romans, the writer of it says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." That's what Jesus had, suffering and glory, identified with Him, suffering and glory, the hope of the future.

James T. Jeremiah:

I was driving along one day sometime after the first experience I gave you. I was trying to say a word of comfort to her. I said, "One day the Lord is coming back. He's coming back. And we're going to have new bodies and we're going to have new minds." And I was giving a usual Baptist theological discussion on the second coming, and out of a clear blue sky she said, "Who's on that committee?" I said, "I am. And I'm voting for it." Aren't you? The Lord's coming back again. What a hope it is. Hope in God. People who conquer depression are those who live in the future. We got a group of people running groups called the prosperity gospelers. Health and wealth for everybody. Every once in a while though, they have health, they die and funerals are held in spite of all the health they have.

James T. Jeremiah:

Then we have those who, they're trying to bring heaven down on earth. I don't want to see my heaven ruined by bringing it down here. There's something better ahead. Something out there that we as believers have, that the world doesn't have, and refuse and reject that which takes away your glorious future in the Lord Jesus Christ. God in His providence, with His presence, by His power, gives us a prospect for the future that helps us to face the present and do it with the assurance that He will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

James T. Jeremiah:

Our Father, we thank You today for Your presence and Your power and the glorious prospect You've given to those of us who are walking through this veil of tears. But one day we shall see Him and be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Speaker 2:

Thank you, Dr. Jeremiah. I trust that you will continue to have Dr. Jeremiah and his wife on your prayers. You're dismissed.