

# The Good Life

08/29/2010 - Jim Johnson

*"The good life is the life that one would like to live." For most of us that means getting an education, working at a vocation that we like, finding a loving spouse and kids, maybe a nice and comfortable home, enough money to do a vacation each year and living in a place where my family and my belongings are secure. Biblically speaking, there is nothing wrong with desiring the good life.*

## A. The people of ancient Judah were \_\_\_\_\_ with the good life.

The people of Judah who lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. enjoyed the good life and had for some time. However, they were growing bored with God and fascinated with the sensuality of idolatry. They became calloused and quite distant from Him and deaf to His prophets.

## B. The people of Judah \_\_\_\_\_ the good life.

God removed his blessing and protection from the land. Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian horde invaded Judah and Jerusalem in 586 BC. Instantly, the good life vanished from Judah. The war was fought on the corners where their kids used to play. Many were slaughtered; the land was looted, the temple was stripped of its glory and left in shambles, and over 10,000 of the best and brightest of Judah were taken back to Babylon as hostages.

## C. Jeremiah was asked to \_\_\_\_\_ on the good life. (Jer. 29:1-3)

The prophet Jeremiah had warned Judah for years that judgment was coming. He watched as it happened. He was left behind in Jerusalem and from there he encouraged the survivors in Judea and wrote to the exiles in Babylon. (Jer. 29:1)

The exiles wondered if they would be absorbed by Babylon or die once their usefulness as slaves had expired? Would there ever be a day, when they might be embraced by God again? Could the nation ever be resurrected and provide a home for the Jews again? What should they do in the meantime? Should they rebel and resist their captors?

## D. Jeremiah gave them \_\_\_\_\_ to again enjoy the good life. (Jer. 29:4-6)

The heart of his message is found in Jer. 29:4-7. God told the exiles in Babylon to do 3 things - build a home /make a living / and have some babies. God wanted them to identify with the country in which they lived while waiting for Him to bring them home.

Christians today are in a similar predicament. (Col 1:13) On the day we were saved we were made citizens of the Kingdom of God, which is why the apostle Peter refers to us as aliens. (1 Peter 2:11) We are in this world, but not of this world - strangers and aliens in a foreign land. In the meantime God wants us to do what they did - to "build a home, make a living and have some babies - to be an integral part of our world – serving as salt and light as we go while we wait for Him to return to bring us home.

## E. Jeremiah provided a \_\_\_\_\_ that makes it possible (Jer. 29:7)

The way to prosper, according to Jer. 29:7, was to vigorously seek the prosperity of the city in which they lived. To seek the welfare of the capital city of Babylon would be to positively influence all the leaders who

lived and worked in that city. To seek her welfare was to pray for her welfare - to ask God's blessing upon the city and the nation it ruled. God expected them to regularly pray for their city and the nation and the people who ruled them.

The reason they were to do this - "*for in its welfare you will have welfare.*" In other words, God said to them "Get down on your knees and seriously pray for Babylon. Pray that my hand would be upon it - leading and directing every decision made at the highest levels of government." If the city has peace, you will have peace because you live in the city.

**The good life comes through a \_\_\_\_\_ life**

**F. Christians are given the same \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Tim 2:1-2)**

In 1 Tim 2:1-2, Paul reminds us that of the same principle. If we want the good life we need to pray for the place we live and the people that rule that place. If we do this it will lead to a *tranquil and quiet life*.

The only history we Americans know is of a wonderful and proud nation greatly blessed by the providence of God. But times are changing and the good life is in jeopardy just as it was before the Jewish exile. Our nation seems to be running away from God. Unfortunately we are all on the same ship. If the ship goes down, we all go down. In many respects we can say that, as the nation fares, so fares the Christian. Or in the words of Jeremiah, "*for in its welfare you will have welfare.*" As our nation suffers, we Christians suffer - as our nation prospers, we Christians prosper.

**G. Judah prayed as they were \_\_\_\_\_ to pray.**

The Jews heard the message. They began a practice there in Babylon that has marked the Jewish culture ever since. They began to fervently pray for their land and her political leaders as an integrated part of their religious experience. This is a documented fact. Their mindset changed and the way they did worship changed. They prayed as they were instructed to pray.

God answered their prayers. The Jews prospered there in Babylon. Their prayers also resulted in a great political shift. The Babylonians were overthrown by the Medo-Persians in 539 BC. The Medo-Persians were not morally much different from the Babylonians, but they did business differently. Their King Cyrus issued a decree that permitted any Jew who wished, to return to their homeland. The children of Israel were given permission to return, because their mothers and fathers prayed.

**G. \_\_\_\_\_ we?**

It took a great deal of pain and suffering to motivate the Jews to pray. But they did and God restored the good life to them. What will it take before we Christians begin to pray?

---

**FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. When is the last time that you initiated prayer for our country or her leaders?
2. What is it about Jeremiah 29:1-7 that speaks to you about your prayer life?
3. What would it take to motivate you to join the prayer cell effort?