

A New Future

Jer 32:1-9; 14-15

SS Lesson for 09/21/2014

Devotional Scripture: Rom 8:28-39

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson helps us understand how God's control assures us of **A New Future**. The **study's aim** is to consider that new beginnings are rooted in the character of God. The **study's application** is to see that God offers repentant believers His forgiveness and a fresh opportunity to start over.

(Adapted from *the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

Key Verse: Jer 32:15

For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land."'

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Jeremiah recorded the time frame in which this prophecy was given because of its significance to the message. The time was the 10th year of Zedekiah which was also the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar. The 10th year of Zedekiah would have ended on October 17, 587 B.C. (using the Judean Tishri-to-Tishri year) while the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar began on April 23, 587 (using the Babylonian Nisan-to-Nisan year). Thus this prophecy occurred sometime between April 23 and October 17, 587 B.C. During this time Babylon was besieging Jerusalem—a siege that lasted from January 15, 588 till July 18, 586—and Jeremiah was under arrest and confined in the palace courtyard of the guard. The reason for Jeremiah's imprisonment is stated. He had been imprisoned by Zedekiah for his "treasonous" prophecies. Jeremiah predicted Nebuchadnezzar's capture of both Jerusalem and the king of Judah. Zedekiah would be handed over to Nebuchadnezzar and taken to Babylon. Any attempt to oppose the Babylonians would not succeed. Such statements were not appreciated by those trying to hold out against Babylon's assault. In this grim time God came to tell Jeremiah of an impending visit. Jeremiah's cousin, Hanamel son of Shallum, would visit Jeremiah in prison and ask him to buy his field at Anathoth. Hanamel was following the Mosaic Law which called for a person to redeem (purchase) the property of a relative who was forced to sell so that it would not leave the family (Lev. 25:25-28; Ruth 4:1-6). So Hanamel told Jeremiah it was his right and duty to buy it. Perhaps Hanamel was trying to sell the land to obtain money for food because of the siege. The village of Anathoth was already under Babylonian control so this purchase would appear to be foolish. Who would buy a parcel of land that had already fallen into enemy hands? Because of this apparent foolishness, God told Jeremiah in advance that Hanamel would come so Jeremiah would recognize God's hand in the request. When Hanamel came, Jeremiah bought the field for 17 shekels of silver (about 7 ounces). Ordinarily this would have been a small price for a field (cf. Gen. 23:12-16). But the size of the field is unknown and it was not really available at that time. Following the legal customs of the day, Jeremiah signed and sealed the deed and had it witnessed before he paid Hanamel. Two copies of the deed of purchase were made. One was sealed by being bound with a piece of string or cord and then having Jeremiah's official seal stamped into a lump of clay placed over the string. The other copy remained unsealed so it could later be examined. Jeremiah handed both copies of the deed to Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe and friend (cf. Jer. 36:4, 8, 26). Jeremiah instructed Baruch to take both documents and put them in a clay jar for preservation. The documents had to last a long time because it would be many years before the people would be able to return from captivity and claim their land. Yet Jeremiah's purpose in buying the land and preserving the deeds was to show that houses, fields, and vineyards would again be bought by the people of Israel in the land.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Have you ever watched a close football game? There is nothing more exciting in football than when the team that is behind gains possession of the ball with only about a minute left to play. If the opposing team has a small enough lead, the game could go either way. Once the trailing team gains possession of the ball, they have a viable shot at snatching a win. Victory is not guaranteed, of course, but without possession of the ball, there is no chance. "Possession" is defined as "a: the act of having or taking into control; b: control or occupancy of property without regard to ownership; c: ownership" (www.merriam-webster.com). In Jeremiah 32, we find that the prophet was thrown into prison by the king of Judah for prophesying that the king would be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon. While Jeremiah was in prison, he purchased some land from his cousin. The irony of Jeremiah's purchase is that he had just received word from the Lord stating that Babylon was about to take control of Judah.

But as we read in verse 15, the Lord also promised that the houses, vineyards, and fields would be possessed again. The enemy would seize their houses, stripping them of their shelter and protection. He would overtake their fields, removing from the Israelites their source of supply. Finally, he would take control of their vineyards, stealing their pleasure and prosperity. Despite all that, God promised a day would come when His people would repossess that which they had lost. Have you ever heard the saying that you do not know what you have until it is gone? When something or someone leaves our lives for any length of time, we recognize the reason it was in our lives. Sometimes the effect of a person or thing on our lives is good; other times it is bad. The Israelites were about to be reminded what it felt like to have their freedom taken away. They were going to learn what it was like to live under the control of another nation. But God is faithful. While He did not tell the Israelites or Jeremiah exactly how long their captivity would last, He did let them know in advance that Babylon's takeover would not last forever. God gives this insight with one word in our text: "again." He told Jeremiah that the houses, fields, and vineyards would be possessed again. Sometimes in the game of life, it appears that the opposing team or the enemy is winning. It can seem as if no hope remains for the future. Circumstances in life can make us feel like the trailing team in the fourth quarter, on third down with twenty-five yards to go. Nevertheless, we serve the God of second chances. We serve the God who makes the impossible possible. We serve the God who is rarely early but never late. The game is not over until the final whistle blows. God is the ultimate coach. He knows all the plays in the book, and He knows exactly who should be on our team. We may feel like the Israelites, with our shelter, protection, supply, pleasure, and prosperity currently possessed by the enemy. But know this: we will possess it all again.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Sometimes we may assume that our own experiences of family connections (or lack thereof) are pretty much everyone else's, and we are surprised to learn otherwise. Our experiences in this regard may carry over into our study of Old Testament prophets, perhaps causing us to assume that their situations were like ours, only to discover the opposite (compare Jeremiah 16:2; Ezekiel 24:15-18; Hosea 3:1). Other than the assistance of a certain Baruch, who appears on the scene in Jeremiah 32, the prophet Jeremiah seems to have been all alone as he confronted the sins of his people. Residents of his hometown even plotted to kill him (1:1; 11:21-23). But as these images become fixed in our minds, today's lesson offers the surprising twist of a cousin who appeared on the scene while the prophet was imprisoned. The astonishing reason for the visit: the cousin wanted Jeremiah to buy a piece of property that was behind enemy lines during a war! It is often said of unusual historical accounts, "You can't make this stuff up." Relatives, property, and prison—all are part of the extraordinary circumstances of our lesson.

Today's lesson involves "redemption" of a parcel of land, so some background on that concept is in order. The right of redemption within the Law of Moses was a provision designed to keep family properties intact. The land of Canaan, the promised land, had been given to the Israelites by the Lord. Since possession of plots of land was to be seen as a sacred trust, the law made provision for redeeming property that had been sold outside the family. This was something like the modern "right of first refusal," but stronger. Israelite families retained ultimate rights over land they had sold, rights set forth in Leviticus 25:23-28. If economic hardship necessitated selling a parcel of land, such land was first to be offered to other family members. There was even a sense that a relative who had the means to "redeem" this property (buy it from the distressed family member) was obligated to do so to keep the land in the family. The seller retained the right of repurchase if his finances improved, but at current market value (compare Leviticus 25:15, 16). All unredeemed land was to revert to the original family owners every 50 years, when a year of jubilee was observed. Overall, the intended effect was to tie people to the land so that an ongoing possibility of economic prosperity could be retained for every family in Israel. From a modern perspective, it placed severe limits on land speculation practices as a means to accumulate wealth.

Jeremiah's hometown of Anathoth (Jeremiah 1:1) was a village in the tribal area of Benjamin, about three miles north-northeast of Jerusalem. Anathoth was a Levite town, a convenient residence for workers in the Jerusalem temple. The priestly tribe of Levi had no tribal area of its own, so its villages and pasture lands were within the territories of other tribes (see Joshua 21:1-4, 17, 18). Levites also had the right of property redemption (Leviticus 25:32, 33). We don't know much about Anathoth, but a close study of the Old Testament yields two facts. First, its residents were opposed to Jeremiah's messages (Jeremiah 11:21-23). Second, people from Anathoth are among those who returned from exile to reestablish their town (see Ezra 2:23; Nehemiah 11:32). That will take place in 538 BC, some 49 years in the future as our text opens.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Living Under Siege (Jer 32:1-5)

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.

2 For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house.

3 For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, "Why do you prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it;

4 and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape from the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face, and see him eye to eye;

5 then he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall be until I visit him," says the Lord; "though you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed" ?"

Imprisonment or captivity (1-2)

Imprisonment because of Satan's testing (Rev 2:10)

10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Imprisonment because it has been prophesied (Acts 20:22-24)

22 "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Imprisonment because of the sake of Jesus (Luke 6:22-23)

22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.

Captivated by sin working in the body and mind (Rom 7:23)

23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Captivated by the influence of Satan (1 John 5:19)

19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Captivated by all kinds of passions and pleasures (Titus 3:3)

3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Captivated by unfaithfulness and perversion (Deut 32:19-20)

19 The Lord saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. 20 "I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.

Anger (3-5)

Anger brought on by jealousy (Prov 6:34)

34 for jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge.

Anger brought on by being quick-tempered (Prov 14:17)

17 A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated.

Anger brought on by harsh words (Prov 15:1)

15 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Anger brought on by violence (Prov 16:29)

29 A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a path that is not good.

Anger brought on by the sinful nature (Gal 5:19-21)

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Assuming no known way out (5)

Assuming no known way out because of discouragement (Exod 6:9)

9 Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.

Assuming no known way out because of enemies (Lam 3:52-54)

52 Those who were my enemies without cause hunted me like a bird. 53 They tried to end my life in a pit and threw stones at me; 54 the waters closed over my head, and I thought I was about to be cut off.

Assuming no known way out because of governmental edicts (Esther 4:3-4)

3 In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4 When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them.

Assuming no known way out because of no hope (Job 6:11)

11 "What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects, that I should be patient?"

Assuming no known way out because of illness (Psalms 88:15-16)

15 From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death; I have suffered your terrors and am in despair. 16 Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me.

God's Promises Are Certain (Jer 32:6-9)

6 And Jeremiah said, "The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

7 'Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you, saying, "Buy my field which is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is yours to buy it." '

8 Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the Lord, and said to me, 'Please buy my field that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.

9 So I bought the field from Hanamel, the son of my uncle who was in Anathoth, and weighed out to him the money--seventeen shekels of silver.

Guidance (6-7)

Guidance that is part of God's plan for our life (Jer 29:11)

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.

Guidance into truth (John 16:13-15)

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

Guidance by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:18)

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Guidance that represents we are a child of God (Rom 8:14)

14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Guidance by insight (Ps 119:99-100)

99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

Guidance as a light for our path (Ps 119:105)

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Guidance into understanding (Ps 119:130)

130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Guidance by wisdom (Prov 2:6)

6 For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Fulfillment (8-9)

Fulfillment of eternal fellowship (1 Cor 1:9)

9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

Fulfillment because God always does what He promised (1 Thess 5:24)

24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

Fulfillment of hope in God (Heb 10:23)

23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.

Fulfillment of all man's true needs (Luke 1:53)

53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

Fulfillment of the desires of those who fear God (Ps 145:19)

19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

The Future Is In God's Hands (Jer 32:14-15)

14 "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is sealed and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days."

15 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land." '

Eternal Protection (14)

Protection of having God with us wherever we go (Josh 1:6-9)

6 "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Protection of God strengthening and helping us (Isa 41:10)

10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Protection of having God for us (Rom 8:31)

31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Protection of God's deliverance (2 Thess 3:1-4)

3 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. 2 And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. 4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command.

Protection of God's rescue (Jer 1:17-19)

17 "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. 18 Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land — against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. 19 They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

Protection from Satan (John 17:15)

15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Protection in the form of refuge in God (Ps 46:1-3)

46 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

Protection from calamity (Prov 14:32)

32 When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge.

Protection of God's righteousness (1 Cor 1:8)

8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Future Promises (15)

God's promises are sure because of the proof of His mighty acts (Ps 145:10-13)

10 All you have made will praise you, O Lord; your saints will extol you. 11 They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, 12 so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.

God's promises are sure because by His words the creation was done (2 Peter 3:4-9)

4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God's promises are sure because His Divine creation proves His eternal power (Rom 1:20)

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

God's promises are sure because God cannot lie (Heb 6:13-19)

13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. 16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,

God's promises are sure because His faithfulness surrounds Him (Ps 89:6-8)

6 For who in the skies above can compare with the Lord? Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings? 7 In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. 8 O Lord God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

God's promises are sure because His promises have been thoroughly tested (Ps 119:140)

140 Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.

God is faithful to His promises of blessings (Ps 89:33-34)

33 but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. 34 I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts From Thomas L. Constable

A challenge to Jeremiah's faith

All of chapter 32 centers around one event in Jeremiah's life. By this time he had given many prophecies about the restoration of Israel to her land. Something happened that challenged his faith in those promises. This chapter records what happened and how the prophet responded.

Jeremiah's purchase of land 32:1-15

This was another of Jeremiah's symbolic acts (cf. 16:1-4; 18:1-12; 19:1-2, 10-11; 27:1— 28:17; 43:8-13; 51:59-64).

32:1

A message came to the prophet from the Lord about 587 B.C., the year before Jerusalem fell.

32:2

Jerusalem was then under siege by the Babylonians, and Jeremiah was imprisoned in the court of the guard somewhere in the king's palace complex. This appears to have been a guarded yard similar to a modern prison yard. Chapters 37—38 provide more historical background.

32:3-5

King Zedekiah had imprisoned Jeremiah for preaching, in the Lord's name, that Yahweh was about to turn Jerusalem over to Nebuchadnezzar who would take possession of it. Zedekiah would not escape, Jeremiah had said, but would face Nebuchadnezzar who would take him captive to Babylon (cf. 2 Kings 25:4-7). There he would remain until the Lord visited him, evidently with death. Jeremiah had preached that fighting against the Chaldeans would be fruitless, which sounded like treason.

32:6-7

The Lord told Jeremiah that his cousin Hanamel would offer to sell him a field in Anathoth, Jeremiah's hometown, just a few miles northeast of Jerusalem.⁴²⁹ Jeremiah had the right to buy it according to the laws of redemption (Lev. 25:25-31; cf. Ruth 4:1-12).

32:8

Sure enough, Hanamel visited his cousin in prison and made Jeremiah the offer, confirming the Lord's message. Hanamel probably wanted to sell his property before he left the land as an exile. The handwriting was on the wall and he could read the signs of the times. To try to sell a piece of confiscated property to a relative in prison reflects insensitivity at best and total contempt at worst. He was offering to sell Jeremiah a piece of the battlefield! Perhaps Hanamel was one of those kinsmen that the Lord told Jeremiah would hate him (cf. 11:19-23; 12:6). ". . . was there ever a more insensitive prison-visitor?" This offer constituted a test of Jeremiah's faith in the promises of restoration, that the Lord had given him, and an opportunity to give witness to that faith. Anathoth was already in Babylonian hands when Jerusalem was under siege. Imagine being offered property to buy that you could not take possession of, or had no hope of ever using!

32:9-10

Jeremiah bought the field for 17 shekels (about seven ounces) of silver. Since we do not know the size of the field or anything else about its condition, we cannot tell if this was a fair price. Jeremiah signed and sealed the deed with witnesses and exchanged the money with his cousin. This would have been viewed as a very foolish thing to do since the Babylonians had taken possession of all the land around Jerusalem by this time. "Since the early, doubt-ridden days [15:18; 20:7] he has learnt, and still teaches the rest of us, to recognize the hidden hand of God in what befalls him, from whatever human quarter it may arise."

32:11-12

Then Jeremiah gave the original purchase document and a copy of it to Baruch ("Blessed") in the sight of all the people who were present. Archaeologists have unearthed similar duplicate deeds in the ancient Near East, one sealed and the other unsealed.

32:13-15

Jeremiah instructed Baruch to store the documents in an earthenware jar, so they would last a long time. These jars were undoubtedly similar to the ones in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were preserved and discovered two millennia later, still in fairly good condition. The jars were usually sealed with pitch. The Lord had revealed to Jeremiah that the

Israelites would again buy and sell land in Judah. In spite of the imminent captivity, they would return to the land and resume life as usual eventually.

Adapted from URL: <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/jeremiah.pdf>

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Personal confession: I am an easy mark for girls selling Girl Scout cookies. If I have any cash in my wallet, I will always buy a box when I see them at a table as I leave the supermarket. I know I am overpaying, that similar cookies are available in the store for half the price. But I always buy them anyway. Why? Because I have faith in their organization and the good things it does in the lives of these youngsters. I never seek a discount. I just pay. It would be easy to see Jeremiah's actions as foolish. What sense did it make for an unmarried, childless man, stuck in prison and facing the calamity of war, to buy property? Even if he wanted to honor his family's obligation to redeem the property, couldn't he have paid much less? No one would have criticized Jeremiah for driving a hard bargain (or avoiding any bargain) in his circumstances, would they? To think this way misses the point: paying—even overpaying—is an act of faith, a testimony to the long-term commitment of the Lord to his nation. Faith can be expensive when it comes to money. Faith impels us to send money to agencies for the relief of people we will never see. Faith brings us to give money for a building project we may never personally enjoy. Faith results in financial support of ministries at a level that may cause us to go without things that make our lives more comfortable. Handling of money can also indicate a lack of faith. May we take heart from Jeremiah's courageous example of faith, trusting God with our hearts and our money.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Those who speak God's truth should not expect to be honored by the world (Jer. 32:2)
2. The message of the Lord never bolsters the prideful desires of sinners (vs. 3)
3. To willingly reject God's will is to invite God's judgment (vss. 4-5)
4. Faith in God is often challenged by reason and circumstances (vss. 6-7)
5. Faith is merely profession until it is put into practice (vss. 8-9)
6. Genuine acts of faith are lasting, long-term testimonies (vss. 14-15)