

# God's Plans for You Despite the Circumstances

A favorite Bible verse people quote to encourage others in hard times is found in Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV): “‘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’.”

This verse, taken out of context, can be said to mean that God's plan for us all is to be prosperous and not to experience anything bad or harmful. But is that an absolute truth to always be applied, in all circumstances? Understanding its context will help us better understand how to apply this verse to our lives.

This verse is part of a letter of instruction the prophet Jeremiah sent to the exiles in Babylon. Jerusalem had not yet fallen to the Babylonians, but deportations had begun and false prophets were telling the people this captivity was not of God – they would soon be returning to their homeland. However, the prophet Jeremiah's letter to the exiles began with these astounding words: “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. . . .” (Jer. 29:4, emphasis added).

They had lost everything and had been carried off into a foreign land, and God was telling them He was the one who had done this to them. He had repeatedly warned His people that if they did not repent of their sins, He would take them out of the land. And, finally, He did.

God went on to tell the exiles they were to build houses and settle in. They were to pray for the peace and prosperity of the enemy city in which they now lived so that they would also prosper and be in peace. And, most importantly, they were not

to listen to the false prophets telling them otherwise. Once the Babylonian empire came to an end, God would fulfill His promise and bring His people back to their homeland. He wanted them to know He had plans to prosper them and not harm them, but to give them a future and a hope.

In the meantime, they should make the best out of the situation He had allowed in the life of their nation. Yes, He wanted them to live in peace and prosperity in Babylon, but the future hope was their eventual return to their homeland.

The lesson is we should pray for God's peace and prosperity in whatever circumstance we find ourselves. But when life is hard, we have a future hope of eternal life with Him, and that is the ultimate plan of peace and prosperity!

Join me for this week's Out of Zion podcast on "I Know the Plans I Have for You." *Walk Thru the Bible* with me each week by downloading our Bible reading plan and get started reading right away! Invite your friends and family to join us! I can't wait to Walk Thru the Bible with you! {eo}

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