



Title: A Graduate's Call

Theme: Walking in Biblical Success

"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. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD," (Jeremiah 29:11-14a)

True hope is based on the revealed Word of God

Today's Scriptures are found in a letter sent by the Prophet Jeremiah to the people of God who have been carried into exile and placed in idolatrous Babylon. He sends this letter to give guidance and comfort to a people who were held captive by the Babylonians. He knows that true hope is based on the revealed Word of God. (The Holy Spirit laid these truths upon my heart as I study the NIV Bible and these other books, Be Decisive; Matthew Henry Commentary; The Expositors Bible Commentary)

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, there are many references to Babylon, a city that was located in the vicinity of modern-day Iraq. In the Word of God Babylon was not just a physical place but also symbolic of a spiritual condition, representing the condition of fallen man and fallen societies. Today, Babylon speaks of a fallen system, of man trying to find eternity without Christ or the Word of God. This system has its own religion and theology and will not bend its heart to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, a religious system that knows nothing of worshiping in spirit and in truth.

Graduates, listen carefully as I read God's promise to you in Jeremiah 29:11-14a, "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. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD," (Jeremiah 29:11-14a) Pray!!!!

I would propose that these passages of Scripture hold God's revealed truths for escaping this world's system and enabling the child of God to walk in step with the Holy Spirit of Christ, thus bringing Biblical success.

Just how can you achieve the high calling that God has placed before you, determine His plans and enjoy a Biblical successful life? The Lord's ultimate purpose is to bless you. There are three truths the Holy Spirit wants you grasp as you leave this phase of life and enter into the next phase. 1.) Feed on the Word of God. 2.) Have a heart that says, "Lord, teach me to pray." 3.) Understand that you are only a steward over what God has given you and there will be a day of accountability.

Several times in Jeremiah's letters to the exile there is a phrase, "bring you back from captivity." This phrase implies the full restoration of life in all its dimensions in relation to fellowship with the Lord. In today's work of God's grace, through faith in Christ as personal Savior and Lord the repentant sinner is brought back into fellowship with God and finds freedom from the captivity of sin. Jesus taught, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. (John 8:34) He also said, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:36)

Powerful thirst and hunger for the Word of God

The first step to walking on the path to Biblical success is to find God's plan for you through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and by having a powerful thirst and hunger for the Word of God.

The key word the Holy Spirit has for graduates from today's text is "seek." The New American Standard Bible gives us this understanding, "And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13)

"Search" (*daras*) in it's most important theological meaning involves studying or inquiring into the Law of the Lord (Ezra 7:10) or inquiring of God (Genesis 25:22; Exodus 18:15; Deuteronomy 12:5). Graduates, you are to be like Ezra who, "...devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees [to others]." (Ezra 7:10)

Every Christian who has discovered God's will and been enabled by the Holy Spirit to achieve the Lord' plan for them has the heart of the psalmist who wrote, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word. I will seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. (Psalm 119:9-12) In his discourse with the devil Jesus said, "It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

A teachable spirit begins with the proper regard for God's Word. Joy comes from knowing the Lord Jesus. God's will for you is revealed through the written Word as you pray for revelation and illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Graduates, the Bible must be your chart by which you make every decision and to which you compare all things. You must study it and meditate upon the Word of God daily. Learn to think Biblically in regard to every part of life.

A man may take the greatest care to follow a road map, but if the map is incorrect he will be misled. A man may have the most accurate map and still end up lost if he does not follow it carefully. It is not enough to desire to do right; for ignorance has led many to think that they are doing right before the Lord until they found themselves being chastised because of living for the things of this world.

Consider 1 Chronicles 13 when David attempted to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem. Uzzah reached out to steady the ark because the oxen stumbled. The Lord struck him down and David got angry because the Lord's wrath broke out against Uzzah. (1 Chronicles 13:9-11) In 1 Chronicles 15:13 we read why God's anger flared. David, God's anointed said, "It was because you, the Levites, did not bring the [ark] up the first time that the Lord broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of Him about how to do it the prescribed way." Christians become like oxen in a china shop when they try to do the Lord's work without inquiring His way through the written Word of God.

A sure contrast is found in the book of Acts 1:4-5 where we read of the disciples following their instructions from the Lord, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized you with water, in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." In chapter 4 we read of Pentecost and in the rest of the Books of Acts we read of a Holy Spirit empowered church doing great things with the Lord. In Acts 1:12-24 we read that the disciples were Christians who knew how to pray and seek the Lord to get His will.

Graduates, the older you get the greater temptation this world system will be. Temptation is going to come at you like stink on a skunk. Jesus was tempted so every creature in heaven and earth could understand that He is the Christ, the Conqueror. It is worth taking note of how He handled temptation. It is important to note that Jesus was led out into the desert by the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 4:1) Graduates, you must be asking God to give you sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading and correction as you prayerfully read the Word of God.

Satan wanted Jesus to prove Himself by extraordinary powers, but the Lord defeated the devil by the power of the Holy Spirit and the written Word. Temptation involves the will and Jesus came to do the will of His Father. Jesus said, "My food... is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work." (John 4:34) Graduates, the Holy Spirit's call is to do the will of God and complete the work He calls you to do.

Graduates, all of you have faced medical affliction at some time or another and had to take medicine or treatments to be restored back to health. Graduates, in order for you to walk in Biblical success, you must agree with God's Word, you have the cancer of sin with in you and apart from having the blood of the Great Physician, Jesus Christ applied for the redemption of your soul you cannot be restored to Biblical health. The Holy Spirit's call is to look at the Word of God as the medicine and nurturing food for the soul and spiritual heart.

In Peru, Sir Samuel came across a plant that became of great use to missionaries in Africa. There was a recurring disease called agu. This disease caused recurring chills and fever. There was a plant called the quinquina and from this plant came medicine that kept the fevers and chills from the disease agu away. The Word of God is the quinquina against the fever and chills of recurring passions and over anxiety that comes while living on this sin trodden earth.

The Holy Spirit of Christ has this question for graduates, "Are you hungry and thirsty for the Word of God and is your heart cry like that of the psalmist who wrote, "O Lord; teach me your decrees... I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your Word." (Psalm 119:12-16)

Lord, teach us to pray

Once you are continually feeding on the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will move you to be like the disciple who came to Jesus and said, "...Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples to pray" (Luke 11:1)

We usually think of John the Baptist as a prophet and martyr, and yet here we see a disciple of Christ remembering this great prophet of God as a man who taught his disciples how to pray. This disciple comes to Christ just as He was finishing praying. Christians know in their hearts of the need of prayer.

A popular term used today is what would Jesus do? He would pray about everything. Jesus prayed at His baptism, (Luke 3:21) He prayed before the choosing of the twelve, (Luke 6:12) when the crowds began to increase, (Luke 5:16) before He asked the twelve for their confession of faith, (Luke 9:18) and at His Transfiguration. (Luke 9:29) The disciples knew that He often prayed alone (Mark 1:25) and it is only natural that those who know Him would ask Him to teach them to pray.

If Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God depended on prayer during His days on this earth (Hebrews 5:7) then why would it seem out of place for us to be obedient to God's Word that tells us to, "...pray continually..." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Prayer finds it's heart in the personality of God, His ability and willingness to communicate with us through the power of the Holy Spirit. It involves a sure knowledge that He has personal control over everything in our lives, in all things and over all creatures. People who believe these truths have no problem connecting with God in prayer. Abraham's servant connected in prayer and the Lord directed him to the person who should be the wife to his master's son. (Genesis 24:10-20)

The Billy Graham Association is a ministry connected to God in prayer and they are very sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. They literally pray for every detail of their outreaches including letters being sent out by name, praying for the connections needing to be made, asking God to do for them as Nehemiah prayed for favor before the Emperor of Persia. (Nehemiah 1:4-11) Men and women who work for the Billy Graham Association are like Ezra the priest and teacher of the law of God. When the King of Persia ordered Ezra to do what it takes to get the house of God back in order, Ezra knew that it was God who put it in the king's heart to honor the house of the Lord. (Ezra 7:27-28)

Graduates, a key to walking in Biblical success is to grasp in your heart what Ezra knew, God is in control at all times and His obedient servants can ask Him to grant them favor before those who have authority over them. The Bible tells you to, "Remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." (Hebrews 13:7) God has set before you Christian leaders who have lived a life of faith in Christ. Follow their faith, trust God, live for Christ and walk in step with the Holy Spirit.

You are about to enter the next phase of life, therefore, remember what the Lord taught you about prayer. Remember how the Lord has answered the prayers of your parents, grandparents, Christian teachers and church leaders. Approach your prayer time with the Lord like that of Ezra and Nehemiah and walk in the attitude of heart of the disciple who approached Christ saying, "Lord teach me to pray."

It is imperative that you understand, “In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9)

Stewards of what God has given

In order to live Biblical successful lives, Christians must know God's Word, let Jesus teach them to pray and understand they are only stewards of what God has given them.

All humble servants of the Lord are very aware of the fact God is not impressed with their achievements, opportunities, possessions, talents or abilities for He is the one who gave those endowments to them. God extends His grace to those who live in the awareness that there will be a day of accountability.

The Holy Spirit moved the apostle Paul to write, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. ...It is the Lord who judges me. ...He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.” (1 Corinthians 4:2)

Graduates, it is what is done for Christ that counts. A man doesn't become a steward after he has been saved, nor after he begins to make good money, have possessions, or authority. He is a steward – good or bad – and he will give an accounting to God. Stewardship in the Christian life demands that a man take good care of what the Lord has given him because he has been commissioned by Christ to manage those affairs for the Lord God.

God gave you the opportunity to achieve, proving yourself faithful has opened the doors of new opportunity. You must continue to prove yourself faithful if you desire to enjoy the continued hand of the Lord upon your life.

Those in this community have been blessed by those who have proven faithful to their God-given opportunities to succeed in academics, the fine arts, in athletic and social skills. A spirit of Christ-likeness will ensure blessings in the future as you remain faithful to what God calls you to do.

God blesses those who are faithful to Him with a joyful heart, yet it must be understood, you have not arrived at the maturity that God wants you. This will take years, many years.

Moses was eighty years in his full training by the time he was used of God to free the Israelites from the bondage of Pharaoh out of Egypt. There are still doors you must walk through, trials which will challenge your faith and battles that can only be won by the mighty hand of God. It is faithfulness that will be rewarded. Do not seek fame, riches and self-indulgences.

You have God's promise, yet you must prove faithful if you want to hear, "...Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness" (Matthew 25:23) at the Judgment seat of Christ.

Graduates, the choice of walking in Biblical success in this sin trodden world lays completely in your willingness to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, leading to eternal life.

Be hungry and thirsty for the Word of God and pray for illumination of the Holy Spirit to make God's truth real so you can enjoy all that God has for you. Go to Christ and say, "Lord teach me to pray!"

Lastly, rejoice in all the doors God has already opened for you and know that He is the one who has enabled you to be faithful in what He has given you so far. Yet, God's continued blessing are determined by your knowing and living upon the fact your stewardship will be judged by the righteous Judge. He rewards those who diligently seek Him.

I think of the great man of God John Wesley, born of Samuel Wesley, a minister of the Church of England. He was raised under good Biblical teaching by his mother for some time and in his later school years attended a Christian College. He was deeply religious but had moments of laxity. He loved missions and became involved in missions. He stood strongly against false teachings.

Bishop Ryles gave this assessment of John Wesley. "John preached the gospel, honored Christ and did extensive good with [his Holy Spirit given gifts]. He was a bold fighter on Christ's side, a fearless warrior against sin, the world, and the devil. He was an unflinching adherent of the Lord Jesus Christ. He honored the Holy Word of God. Let us thank God for John Wesley."

Graduates, many have thanked God for you. It is by His divine grace new doors of opportunity are opening up for you. The Holy Spirit's call for you today is to grasp for more of Christ in your heart and life, and desire with all your heart to pray through the vision He has already given you. Be faithful because the Lord has already shown you His faithfulness in opening doors for you in many ways. It is your choice from this day on. Faithfulness to Him will cause others to say, "Let us thank God for our graduates." Choose Biblical success! Let us pray for our graduates!

Let us pray for our graduates!