



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 passages of Scripture are found around Jared's theme verse that the Holy Spirit has laid upon his heart for his life. These Scriptures are found in a letter sent by the Prophet Jeremiah to the people of God whom 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 God or His Word. 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.

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.

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 God. 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)

On February 7, 1994 at the age of 6 Jared found that freedom when he confessed his need of a Savior and he invited Jesus Christ to come into his life and heart. Days on end we his parents watched Jared bounce through the house joyfully expressing his new relationship with Christ. He unashamedly confesses Christ by speech, and through expressions of his life he has shown Christ's love to others. This is especially true in befriending the lonely and the discouraged.

Jared, listen carefully as I read God's promise to you in Jeremiah 29:11-14, "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)

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.

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 powerful thirst and hunger for the Word of God.

The key word the Holy Spirit has for you 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). Jared 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 plans and has been enabled by the Holy Spirit to achieve His plans 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 and He will be revealed to you through the written Word as you pray for illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Jared, 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 by the Lord because of willful ignorance.

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, "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 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.

Jared, when you leave home and get out into this world system 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 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) Jared you must be asking God to give you sensitivity to Holy Spirit leading and correction.

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)

Jared, considering that you are entering the medical field you can look at the Word of God as the medicine for the soul and 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 agu away. The Word is the quinquina against the fever and chills of recurring passions and over-anxiety that comes with trying to live the Christian life before the Lord.

Jared for application's sake, "Are you hungry and thirsty for the Word of God and is your heart cry like that of the psalmist that says, "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 me 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 Jesus was finishing praying. There is a knowing in the hearts of Christians for 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 disciple 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 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 knowing that He has personal control in 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 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) On many outreaches I have observed this quality ministry pray a vision through for five years to it's healthy completion.

Jared, you have a four to five year vision placed before you and my advice to you is say "Jesus, teach me to pray it through. Hebrews 13:7 tells you to "Remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you. Considered the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." As you enter into the next phase of life remember what the Lord taught you about prayer. Remember how the Lord brought Sandy, our sweet yellow Labrador dog into our family's life. How we prayed specifically for three months and God gave us exactly what we asked for. Remember how when Sandy got loose from the house, we prayed and how quickly the Lord brought her back safely to us. Remember how the Lord granted you favor with the College of the Ozarks, as they only accepted 300 out of over 3,000 applications to attend their college next year and you were one of them.

Jared, 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."

Are only stewards

In order to live Biblically successful lives, Christians must 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)

Jared, 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 gave you the opportunity to be homeschooled and you proved yourself by ending up with a 3.8 GPA. Your ACT scores showed that you deserve the attention of several colleges. Your proving yourself faithful landed you a full scholarship at College of the Ozarks amounting to \$15,400.00. The Lord gave you the opportunity to be a paper boy and you saw that through for 7 years, until you were given a better job working at McDonalds with more responsibility and money. You have worked there now for 3.5 years and you have seen many a teenager come and go. You have stayed even when the job at different times was very difficult. You proved yourself faithful in TFC and you are going now on your fourth mission trip. Your faithfulness has been a blessing to all who have invested prayer, time and money on your behalf. You are a youth leader who has developed into someone who can be counted upon. TFC Staff and Youth Minister Holly Hrywnak wrote, "Jared has the heart of a servant. Whenever I need help with something, he is the first to volunteer to fix the problem."

Those in this church have been blessed by your faithfulness and willingness to step in and do your part in making sure the song service is done in a way that feeds those who faithfully attend this church. You died to your own desires in music to serve those who are fed differently in music. This spirit of humility is rarely seen in the church today. You have not followed the crowd in order to be a blessing to the elderly.

You have been proven faithful in many things. God has and will continue to bless your faithfulness to Him. Yet, your life is still just getting started and you have not arrived to that place God wants to use you for His glory. 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. You have before you a mission trip, and four to five years of college and then on to medical school. God has provided abundantly and you must prove faithful if you are going to hear your praise from the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Lets us thank God for...

The choice of walking Biblically successful in this life that leads to eternal life lays completely in your willingness to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life.

Be hungry and thirsty for the Word of God and pray for illumination of the Holy Spirit to make God's truth so real to you so that you can enjoy and delight in 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 that has enabled you to be seen as 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 and 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 homeschooled 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 Ryle's 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 and let us thank God for John Wesley."

I thank God for you Jared, by His divine grace it appears thus far that doors are opening for you to get to a Christian College with the opportunity to take pre-med courses. This is very appropriate for a young man who when he was very young was sure that God called him to be a missionary doctor. You were so sure that you would sleep on the floor at night getting prepared to rough it for God in medical missions work.

The Holy Spirit's call for you today is to grasp for more of Christ in your heart and life, 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 Jared Laughlin."

Make the wisest choice that anyone can make, "Grasp your Graduate Call," grasp God's plan and make His vision worth praying through, "Walk in Biblical Success."

At this time I would like to ask Pastor Ronald Scheimo come up and we will pray for Jared.