

Turn straight away to the word of God. The book of Jeremiah chapters 32 and 33, Jeremiah 32 and 33:

*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. At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard which was in the palace of the king of Judah. For Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him, saying, “Why do you prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord: “****Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it****; Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye; and he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain until I visit him,” says the Lord; “though you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed?” ‘ “*

*Jeremiah said, “The word of the Lord came to me: ‘Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you and say, “Buy my field which is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.” ‘ Then Hanamel my cousin came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the Lord, and said to me, ‘Buy my field which is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.*

*“And I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions, and the open copy; and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my cousin, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Jews who were sitting in the court of the guard. I charged Baruch in their presence, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “****HOUSES AND FIELDS ANDVINEYARDS SHALL AGAIN BE BOUGHT IN THIS LAND****.” ‘*

*“After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the Lord, saying:****‘Ah Lord God! It is thou who hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thy outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for thee,****who showest steadfast love to thousands, but dost requite the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God whose name is the Lord of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in deed; whose eyes are open to all the ways of men, rewarding every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings; who hast shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and hast made thee a name, as at this day. Thou didst bring thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror; and thou gavest them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; and they entered and took possession of it.* ***But they did not obey thy voice or walk in thy law; they did nothing of all thou didst command them to do. Therefore, thou hast made all this evil come upon them.****Behold, the siege mounds have come up to the city to take it, and because of sword and famine and pestilence* ***the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it.*** *What thou didst speak has come to pass, and behold, thou seest it. Yet thou, O Lord God, hast said to me, “Buy the field for money and get witnesses”— though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.’”*

*The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: “****Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too hard for me?****Therefore, thus says the Lord: Behold, I am giving this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it. The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city shall come and set this city on fire, and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs incense has been offered to Ba′al and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods, to provoke me to anger. For the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth; the sons of Israel have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands,” says the Lord. “This city has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built to this day, so that I will remove it from my sight because of all the evil of the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah which they did to provoke me to anger—their kings and their princes, their priests and their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned to me their back and not their face; and though I have taught them persistently they have not listened to receive instruction. They set up their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to defile it. They built the high places of Ba′al in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

*“Now therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence: Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation;* ***I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.****I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them****. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.****I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.’*

*“For thus says the Lord:* ***‘Just as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them.****Fields shall be bought in this land of which you are saying, “It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.” Fields shall be bought for money, and deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed, in the land of Benjamin, in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb; for I will restore their fortunes, says the Lord.’”*

*The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a* ***second time****, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard: “Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it—the Lord is his name:****‘Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things which you have not known.’****For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah which were torn down to make a defense against the siege mounds and before the sword: ‘The Chaldeans are coming in to fight and to fill them with the dead bodies of men whom I shall smite in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their wickedness. Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.’* (Note: You know those are the two things that every country in the world wants. **Prosperity** and **security**.)***‘I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel,*** *and rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them; they shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.’ “*

*“Thus says the Lord: ‘In this place of which you say, “It is a waste without man or beast,” in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man or inhabitant or beast, there shall be heard again the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord: “Give thanks to the Lord of armies, For the Lord is good, For His mercy is everlasting,”* ***For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the Lord.’***

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In this place which is waste, without man or beast, and in all of its cities, there shall again be habitations of shepherds resting their flocks. In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them,’ says the Lord. ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah****. In those days and at that time I will cause a RIGHTEOUS BRANCH to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.****In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: “****THE LORD IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS****.”’ For thus says the Lord: ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn cereal offerings, and to make sacrifices* ***FOREVER****.’ “*

*The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: “Thus says the Lord: ‘If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so* ***I will multiply the descendants of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me****.’”*

*The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: “Have you not observed what these people are saying, ‘The Lord has rejected the two families which he chose’? Thus, they have despised my people so that they are no longer a nation in their sight. Thus says the Lord: ‘If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his descendants to rule over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* ***For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy upon them.’”***

You'll see in a moment why I had to take those two chapters together. They really do belong to each other. Let's bow our heads in prayer. “Father, you are the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Levi, of David. You are the God of Jerusalem. Oh, we ***PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM***. And we pray, Oh Lord, that we may not, as a nation, so compromise ourselves financially with Israel's enemies, that this nation cannot pray for the peace of Jerusalem. For those only who pray for her peace shall prosper. And so, as we turn these pages this morning, give us---in-spite of the heat--- concentrated attention, open hearts, and a willingness to be obedient, so that we may give to everyone who asks us, a reason concerning the HOPE that is in us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.”

 ***Jerusalem Encircled, Jeremiah in Prison***

Before we look at chapters 32 and 33 of Jeremiah, let me paint the ***BACKGROUND*** for you. You've got it already, but if I spell it out, that will help you to understand the passage. ***ONE***: ***JERUSALEM*** is shut in. ***TWO***: ***JEREMIAH*** is shut-in within Jerusalem. Jerusalem is already hemmed in with the Babylonian army. For three years that city is going to be besieged. ***FOOD*** is going to get very short. MONEY is going to inflate like nobody's business. ***DISEASE*** is going to be rampant in the dirty streets, for they cannot even get rid of their sewage.And so, ***JERUSALEM***, as a ***CITY***, is shut in...and all the ***LAND*** around it has gone. All the fields are now under the trampling feet of the Chaldean army from Babylon. So, Jerusalem is ***SHUT IN***. Yet within Jerusalem, ***JEREMIAH*** himself is ***SHUT IN***. He has been put into ***PRISON***. And for most of the rest of the book of Jeremiah, we see him in a prison cell in the dungeon within the palace, in the Court of the Guard. But, you know, when God's men are bound, the word of God is ***NOT*** bound. And so many great things have been spoken and written from within prison walls that have gone all around the world as God's word. I think for example of ***PAUL'S*** letter to the Philippians, which came out of jail. He was in chains, "But the word of God is not bound," he said. I think of people like ***JOHN BUNYAN***, 12 years in prison; but we wouldn't have Pilgrim's Progress, if he hadn't been imprisoned. I think of that great, French, saint lady, ***MADAME GUYON***. It was out of her imprisonment that those matchless devotional writings of hers came. I think of ***WATCHMAN NEE***. I think of gay ***GEORGI VINS***. I think of ***RICHARD WURMBRAND***. How much has come out of prison?

And Jeremiah is now in prison; but the word of God is not bound. And here we are, 2,500 years later, reading the words that came out of that prison cell. Isn't it exciting! You can imprison God's ***MEN***, but you can't imprison his ***MESSAGE***. Now these two chapters are part of four chapters, which have been called the "***BOOK OF HOPE***." I'm afraid most people who don't know the book of Jeremiah totally, think of Jeremiah as a man of doom and gloom...a man of pessimism and despair. And it's true that much of what he had to say was gloomy, because they were in a bad situation. But Jeremiah---if his name is used to indicate that a person is a pessimist---Jeremiah is being libeled, because Jeremiah is the man of ***HOPE***. He is a prisoner, but he is a prisoner of ***HOPE***. And these four chapters: 30, 31, 32, 33 --- are full of ***HOPE***! There is a note of gloom. There is a note of realism. The city is going to fall, as the fields around it have fallen, but the HOPE shines through. The night is darkest just before the dawn. And the darkness, of chapters 1 to 29, is now highlighted by the dawn of a HOPE that is unmatched: The ***HOPE*** of a ***NEW COVENANT***. The ***HOPE*** of ***JERUSALEM*** becoming a city of praise and of joy, giving thanks to the Lord as it was meant to do.

***Hope is Promised in the Midst of Despair: Faith vs Flesh***

Now I've given two titles to these two chapters. [.... Chapter 31: Fields Recovered.... Chapter 33 - sorry....] Chapter 32: ***FIELDS RECOVERED***. Chapter 33: ***FORTUNES RESTORED***.

As he sat alone in his prison cell, he got this inner feeling that his cousin was going to come and try and sell land that no longer belonged to him. And in the incident that follows, you have a clear ***CONTRAST*** between a man of the ***FLESH***, and a man of ***FAITH***: how ***FLESH*** behaves in a ***CRISIS***, and How ***FAITH*** behaves in a ***CRISIS***. Flesh does a nice little calculation and says, "I have lost my land. The enemy has already occupied it, but I still hold the trust deeds. Could I get some hard cash for those---because cash is more valuable than property? I am going to redeem my property. I am going to spend it now."

And you know there are many in England doing that. Do you know that spending last Christmas was about 50% up in the High Street of Guildford? Why? Because there was more money around? No. Because people were getting rid of their savings and spending it now. That is what the ***FLESH*** decides to do. There was a decline at first in tourism overseas---last year when money got tighter---but it has gone up again this year. Why? Because people are spending it now. They're going to Switzerland now...in case they can't go again. They're spending it ***NOW***. That's what the ***FLESH*** does. The flesh wants to get into ready cash that can be spent now, as quickly as possible, before the ***RAGING INFLATION*** just makes everything ***WORTHLESS***.

***1) Fields Recovered: Jeremiah Redeems His Cousin’s Property***

And so, Jeremiah got this sense that his cousin, who was a man of the ***FLESH***, would come and try and sell him a useless bit of property -- because this cousin would rather have ***CASH***, that he could spend in the last few days in Jerusalem than a ***PROPERTY*** that was already occupied by the enemy. And when the cousin actually came to visit him in prison, and carried in his hand the title deeds, Jeremiah said, *"I knew then that that* ***PREMONITION*** *was from the Lord and that God had spoken."* And Jeremiah, though there was raging inflation and food shortage, spent his money on a ***FIELD*** that he would never be able to walk over --- because he was a man of ***FAITH***, not a man of the flesh. And he invested for the ***FUTURE***. And the ***MONEY***--- which might have bought him the desperately needed food he wanted in that prison.... because in Middle East prisons to this day, food is not provided! You are dependent on what you can buy, or on what your relatives bring in. And so, Jeremiah needed what money he had.

But according to the land laws of the Bible, if a piece of land was being sold, the relatives of the man who owned it had the first option on the land, so that it could be kept in the family. Leviticus 25, verse 25, states ***THE LAW OF PROPERTY***. And so, you couldn't build up big property development in the Bible days. Properties stayed within the ***FAMILY***. And I think that's one of the social provisions that we need to apply to our political situation too. And so, the cousin, ***HANAMEL***, came to Jeremiah and said, *"Would you buy this plot of land? It's a good plot of land. You know, it's really a good soil."* He thought Jeremiah was *'dense'*, as the prophet says ... as the ***POET*** said! And he thought Jeremiah was a 'religious sucker.' They think we're like that. You know? We're ***NOT*** such fools! And Jeremiah wasn't such a fool either! And Jeremiah said, "*Done! I'll buy it."* And ***FAITH*** is careful. Faith isn't fool hardy. So, he got it all signed, sealed, and delivered legally. And he got the two trust deeds buried in a jar and sealed with pitch. That's their equivalent of a safe. And you know how long documents can stay in those conditions from the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which had lasted over 2000 years in a jar. And so, Jeremiah said, *"Right! I'll take that land, because it's an investment in the* ***FUTURE****, and I have* ***FAITH IN THE FUTURE****. You are a man of the* ***FLESH****. You want to get cash and spend it now. I am a man of* ***FAITH****. And so, I'll* ***BUY*** *that land and* ***BELIEVE****."*

Do you know in my previous church, there used to be a man.... He died before I got there... There was a man called Mr. Beason. He owned the local ironmonger shop. And some 40 or 50 years ago, he said at a church meeting, "I believe we must buy the four houses on this side of the church, and the four houses, and the chip shop, and the pub on this side of the church. Because one day, that land will be needed because God will send revival." And 40 years later, it was our privilege to build on that land that that man had faith to believe. And it was a lot to persuade a church to buy all that property and not use it for 40 years. But he was a man, not of the ***FLESH***, but a man of ***FAITH***. And so, he invested in the ***FUTURE***.

Jeremiah could see ahead. And even if he never saw the plot of land, he knew, in God, that one day that plot of land would belong to his family. So, he signed and sealed the deed. Now, here is the ***DIFFERENCE*** between a man of flesh and a man of faith. A man of ***FLESH*** can only see the ***IMMEDIATE*** situation, and his investment will reflect what he sees. He can only read the financial times. He can only gauge how business is going. He can't see further than that, because he is a man of the ***FLESH***, and flesh can't see very far. And all the futurologists, and the professors of futurology, and the think tanks... they're coming up with precisely ***OPPOSITE*** forecasts of the future. Because all they've got to see into the future with is ***FLESH***--- the resources of the human mind. But men of ***FAITH*** can see further. And men of faith will behave quite differently---even in their investments---in these days of crisis.

***Jeremiah’s Realistic Prayer***

The ***SECOND*** thing I want to mention from chapter 32, is that from ***REDEEMING PROPERTY***, Jeremiah turns to very ***REALISTIC PRAYER***. As you first read the prayer that he prayed after he had done this, you get the impression that his faith was very strong. It's a tremendous statement about God's almighty power: *"You created the heavens and the earth. You brought Israel out of Egypt. You have brought the Babylonian army against Jerusalem. You are almighty. You are all powerful. And you are just, and you visit the guilt of the fathers on the children"* --- and all that. It sounds like a tremendous prayer of faith. But when you read ***BETWEEN*** the lines, it's not. It's a prayer of ***DOUBT***! It's a very honest prayer. It's a prayer that's battling to hold on to reason, because sometimes ***FAITH*** and ***REASON*** seem to go in ***OPPOSITE*** directions. And having signed, sealed and delivered the deeds for that field at Anathoth, Jeremiah had ***SECOND THOUGHTS***. And when he was left alone, with nothing to eat, and no money, he said*, "What have I done?... What have I done? I'm crazy. Hanamel really was right. I'm a fool."* And his prayer is desperately trying to persuade himself that it's been all right. He says, *"Nothing is too hard for God; so, God CAN give me that field one day.... But Lord, why did you tell me to buy it? Why did you say that?"* And his faith is ***QUESTIONING*** and ***DOUBTING***.

I praise God for the sheer ***HONESTY*** of the prayers of the Bible. Here's Jeremiah trying to whistle in the dark in that dungeon, which must have had no daylight. He got depressed and he's saying, *"Lord, nothing's too hard for you. But* ***WHY*** *did you tell me to buy that land...yet you told me!"* "***YET***"..."***YET***"..."***YET***". Reading between the lines, Jeremiah is battling to keep his reasoning: *"Here you are starving in this dungeon, and you've spent your money on a plot of land you may never see. Lord, I* ***KNOW*** *nothing is too hard for you. I* ***KNOW*** *you created the heavens and the earth. I* ***KNOW*** *you brought Israel out of Egypt. I* ***KNOW*** *you've brought punishment on this city. I* ***KNOW*** *you're in charge of history; ...but Lord,* ***WHY*** *did you tell me to buy that property???"* Do you get the feel of it? *"I just feel I've been* ***MISLED****."*

Do you ever feel you've been left out on a limb by God? Then I want you to notice this, that Jeremiah did not share his doubts with Hanamel or with the guard or with anyone else. He went ***STRAIGHT TO THE LORD*** with his question. And if you are being plagued with questions about some little step of faith you took. If you're wondering if you did the right thing. Do you know the best thing to do about it? Don't talk to anyone else. Go to ***GOD*** and tell ***HIM*** you're a bit shaky; and tell ***HIM*** that you know nothing is too hard for ***HIM***: *"But Lord, that's a big thing we've taken on."* Some of you members of the church here may be feeling a little that way since last Tuesday night. "What have we done taking on, in principle, a staff of seven full-time workers here? What have we done? It's gonna take an awful lot of money. What have we done in committing ourselves to trebling the size of this fellowship? What have we done??" Are you getting cold feet already? Don't come to ***ME*** about it. I don't want to hear about it. One or two have been to me already. I've had enough. Go to ***HIM*** and say, "Lord, nothing is too hard for you. Yet, ***WHY*** did you tell us to do that?" Take your doubt to the only one who can sort it out.

So, Jeremiah in an utterly ***REALISTIC*** prayer says, *"Lord, I can't see it. I can't see it."* Why couldn't he see it? What was he ***DOUBTING*** in God? Some people say he was doubting God's ***MIGHT***. I don't think so, because he says, *"God, nothing's too hard for you. You made the heavens and the earth. You brought Israel out of Egypt. You can get Jews out of any situation when they're trapped."* But I think he is questioning God's ***MORALITY***. Let me hasten to explain what I mean. He's saying, *"God, they don't deserve to have this land back. You visit the guilt of the fathers and the children, and they've rebelled against you.* ***THEY DON'T DESERVE IT****. I just don't see how you can do it for them. I don't see how you can remain a just God and give us this land back."* That's what he's saying. *"Lord, I bought that field* ***BUT*** *they don't deserve it. And how can you remain a* ***RIGHTEOUS*** *God and give them that field back? I just don't get it."*

***God Deals With Jeremiah’s Doubts***

So, he's got ***DOUBTS***, and he brings the question to the Lord. And so God, in verses 26 to 44, ***REPEATS*** all the ***PROMISES*** he's made. God freely admits, *"Yes, I brought the Babylonians."* God freely admits he's going to smash the city. God freely admits they've rebelled and deserve it. God describes all the dreadful things they've done---killing their own babies to a pagan God, Molech, in the valley of Hinnom, which was later to become the valley of Gehenna, the picture of hell. And God says, *"I've seen on their flat roofs their* ***IDOLS****. I've seen them burning incense up there. I've seen it all, Jeremiah. But, Jeremiah, I am going to* ***MARRY*** *them* ***AGAIN****. I'm going to make a* ***COVENANT*** *with them* ***AGAIN****."* Now the key word in a marriage service are the two key words are--"***I WILL***." The longest sentence in the English language--"***I WILL***." And you know that God uses it 12 times in the next few verses? Listen: *"****I WILL*** *gather them.* ***I WILL*** *bring them back. I WILL make them dwell.* ***I WILL*** *be their God. They* ***SHALL*** *be my people.* ***I WILL*** *give them one heart and one way.* ***I WILL*** *make with them an everlasting covenant.* ***I WILL*** *put the fear of me in their hearts.* ***I WILL*** *rejoice in doing them good, and* ***I WILL*** *plant them with all my heart and all my soul."* You couldn't have a better marriage service than that. What wonderful words***--"I WILL."***

And so, God says, *"Jeremiah, it's alright. When I say,* ***'I WILL'****, I mean, 'I will.' When I make such a covenant promise and marry my people, then I stay with them. It's an* ***EVERLASTING COVENANT****.* ***I WILL*** *be their God and they* ***WILL*** *be my people.* ***I WILL****."* And Jeremiah's heart, which had begun to doubt, leaps again. The God who says, "***I WILL***." You know, you can almost sum up...and this thought has just come to me this second...you can almost sum up the Bible in two phrases--"I AM says, ‘***I WILL***.’" Just let those two little couplets dwell in your mind: "***I AM."*** "***I WILL****."* What God ***SAYS*** is what he ***DOES***.

And so, Jeremiah is told, "***FIELDS WILL AGAIN BE BOUGHT AND SOLD.*** *Those title deeds: you'll be able to take them to a solicitor one day."* Just as after the London Blitz---when whole areas of East London had been devastated and people could come with a piece of paper and say, "I'm entitled to that land. That bit of rubble is mine," so God says, *"Jeremiah, you'll be able to come, and you'll be able to dig up that jar and you'll (Jeremiah) be able to say, 'That land is mine because,* ***"I WILL****."'"*

So, God repeats all his promises. Yes, he admits, *"I will bring* ***EVIL*** *to them* ***FIRST****, but after that I will bring them* ***GOOD****---for them and their children. I'll do it with all my heart and all my soul."*

Let me just apply chapter 32 to ***OUR*** situation before going any further. You know the investments you make at this moment show whether you have ***FAITH*** in the ***FUTURE*** of Britain, right? Are you realizing all your investments---are you taking your savings out to take that holiday now before you lose the possibility of having it? A lot of people are doing that. There are advertisements appearing in our press saying, "Take your money out of Britain. We will invest it in a trust fund in America for you. That's much safer for you to do." You see where your ***FAITH*** is? There your ***TREASURE*** will be also…. Where do you really believe the ***FUTURE*** lies? If you really believe that God will do what we believe he's promised to do here in Millmead, you're going to be investing more money ***HERE***.

And in this world, where we put our ***MONEY*** shows where our ***FAITH*** lies. And Britain is going through a crisis at this moment. ***FOOD*** is going to be desperately short. Farmers are wondering how on earth they're gonna feed their cattle through the summer and through next winter. And ***INFLATION*** is going to go on. I’ll tell you, my faith in the future---I'm starting saving in index linked bonds. But you see where your ***FAITH*** is, you ***SAVE***, that's where you ***INVEST***---where you believe the ***FUTURE*** lies.

Well, where does the ***FUTURE*** lie for Britain? Do you believe that God is speaking to this nation and saying that He IS going to save us? Do you believe that? There are many prophecies coming to that effect. There's one that came decades ago---to a woman in Russia, I believe---that Britain would be saved by praying women. Do you believe that? There are more and more words coming through now that God is going to do a new thing in Britain. Do you believe that? That God is going to ***SAVE*** us from the brink and ***RESTORE*** us as a nation to ***FAITH*** in Himself? Do you believe that? I hear the sound of the wind in the mulberry trees already. Do you? I sense that God's people are waking up in this land. I sense a stirring. The tide's a long way out, but I believe it's ***TURNED***. And though the number of convinced and informed active Christians in this country is between one and 2%, I believe that the vision of trebling that number till we've got 5%---the number that can influence and reverse trends---I believe that that can come. Would you be prepared to ***INVEST*** some money in that; or is it throwing it away?

But let's go ***ONE STAGE FURTHER***. The Christian, he looks forward ***BEYOND*** the future of Britain. He looks ***FORWARD*** to a place to which he's going. And he so believes in that future that he lays up treasure for himself in ***HEAVEN*** with his money. Don't believe those who say, "You can't take it with you." That's not quite true. It is ***TRUE*** that you ***CAN'T*** take it with you; but it's also ***TRUE*** that you ***CAN*** send it on in advance. One of the puzzling stories which Jesus told is the parable of the ***UNJUST STEWARD*** in the beginning of Luke 16. And many Christians have said, "I don't understand why Jesus commends a ***CRIMINAL***." But if you read the story, Jesus commends the criminal because he used his money so that in the ***FUTURE,*** he might have some ***FRIENDS*** ***TO*** ***WELCOME HIM***. And Jesus said, *"Use your money in the same way, so that one day when you arrive in heavenly habitations, there'll be lots of people to welcome you, who say, 'Thank you for spending that money. It brought me to the Lord. Thank you for investing that in Me.'"* That's what Jesus meant by ***LAYING UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN***. He meant laying up ***MONEY*** in heaven...money---using mammon, and sending it on in ***ADVANCE***.

Where does your ***FAITH*** lie? Are you a man of the ***FLESH***? Are you reading the financial times saying, "Where can I best put my money immediately?" Or are you also a man of ***FAITH***? Do you have ***FAITH*** in Britain? Do you have ***FAITH*** in the future of the church in Britain? Do you have ***FAITH*** in heaven itself, and are you sending money in advance? My grandfather, who was a minister, as you know, whenever he wanted some money, he used to go to people and he used to say, "Got a great investment for you: an investment in the bank of heaven". He once even went to the Duke of Devonshire and said it, and he got his investment.

But Jesus talks very ***PRACTICALLY*** like this, and he says, *"Where your heart is... or where your* ***TREASURE*** *is, there will your* ***HEART*** *be also. But likewise, where your* ***HEART*** *is there will your* ***TREASURE*** *be."* And Jeremiah was a man of ***FAITH***. I'll leave you to make the personal application to yourself.

***2)*** ***Fortunes Restored: Rules of Economic Recovery***

Now let's look very briefly at chapter 33. The last sentence of chapter 32 is the ***KEY PHRASE*** for 33: "***I WILL RESTORE YOUR FORTUNES***." And again, I want you to take the word *'fortunes'* literally. It is referring to ***MATERIAL PROSPERITY***. And if there's one thing that the western nations are concerned about at the moment, it is economic recovery. And chapter 33 is all about ***ECONOMIC RECOVERY.*** When God says fortunes, He means ***FORTUNES***. He doesn't mean *'spiritual blessings'*, he means ***FORTUNES***. And He says, *"I will restore you economically."* And we are going to see in this chapter the ***RULES OF ECONOMOC RECOVERY*** according to Almighty God. They are very interesting.

God says to Jeremiah, *"Just* ***ASK*** *Me, and I'll tell you some* ***SECRETS*** *about the future. Things that you don't know."* What wouldn't people in the stock exchange give to know the exact state of the stock exchange 12 months from now? What wouldn't they give? And God says*, "Jeremiah, just* ***CALL*** *to me, and I'll tell you about the* ***FUTURE****.... Here's a* ***TIP*** *straight from heaven!"* That's what the verse means. And so, Jeremiah is invited to listen to the ***SECRETS*** of economic recovery, that he may ***INVEST*** his money ***WISELY***, as he did in that ***FIELD*** at Anathoth. That was a ***WISE*** investment because God had told him a ***SECRET***. Now, I believe that if you really want to put your money where it should be put, God will give ***YOU*** secrets too. Call upon Him, ***ASK HIM*** where you should put it. ***ASK HIM*** to guide your investment. ***ASK HIM*** to handle your affairs. See if He doesn't make known to you things that all the big men in the city would love to know---and just don't know---because, you see, God wants you to be a ***STEWARD***, and so He wants to ***HELP*** ***YOU*** with your investment. He wants to ***GUIDE YOU***. He wants you to put it where it should be. So, *"Call upon Me,"* He says, *"and I'll make known to you* ***MY SECRETS***".

Well now, the secret is, ***NOTHING*** that man can do to defend the situation is of any use. It is only what ***GOD DOES*** that matters. And so, God begins by saying, *"Jeremiah, you see all these* ***MOUNDS*** *that have been put up... these* ***TRENCHES*** *that have been dug around Jerusalem to defend Jerusalem against the onslaught of the enemy?"* He said, *"Do you realize that the enemy will just fill those trenches with dead bodies of Jews and use it as a* ***GRAVE****??* ***MAN*** *cannot defend himself against what is happening"*. And in that city of raging ***INFLATION*** and ***FOOD SHORTAGE***, God said, *"Jeremiah, the* ***FIRST*** *thing for you to know is that* ***IT'S WHAT I DO*** *that matters, not what* ***MAN DOES*** *to defend himself."*

***Two Secrets of Renewed Prosperity***

But then he says ***THREE THINGS***. ***FIRST***, the secret of ***RENEWED PROSPERITY***---verses one to eight, and 12 to 13...renewed prosperity. There are two secrets (of renewed prosperity). ***FIRST*** -- that ***HEALTH MUST COME BEFORE WEALTH***. That's the first secret. And I think most people would agree, I think most of you would agree that you'd rather lose your ***WEALTH*** than your ***HEALTH***. Would you?

Let's take a vote. Who would rather lose their health than their wealth? Who would rather lose their wealth than their health? Right? Well, that begins with common sense. And God says here is the ***FIRST SECRET***. Put your ***HEALTH*** before your ***WEALTH***. And the ***FIRST*** thing he says is, *"I will* ***HEAL*** *you. I will bring you* ***HEALTH****."* That's the ***FIRST*** step to economic recovery, because you can't earn your money unless you're healthy. You need to be ***HEALTHY*** to be ***WEALTHY***---healthy, wealthy and wise. You notice it starts with healthy. So that's the first principle of economic recovery: *"I will* ***HEAL*** *you. You are a sick society, and you need health...you need to be healed.”*

But now comes the ***SECOND SECRET***. And this is where the world would not agree with us. The second secret is that ***SPIRITUAL HEALTH COMES BEFORE MATERIAL WEALTH.*** It's not just health before wealth. It is ***SPIRITUAL*** health before ***MATERIAL*** wealth. That's the secret. That's where the world leaves us behind. The world doesn't understand that. The world says health before wealth. I agree, amen. But if we say spiritual health before material wealth, the world doesn't understand. You see God goes on to say, *"Jeremiah, I will heal them by* ***CLEANSING*** *them from guilt and* ***FORGIVING*** *their sins."* And that will lead them to ***PROSPERITY*** and ***SECURITY***. Aren't those the two things our government would, would give anything to be able to give us: prosperity and security? And God's word says the road to those two things is the road of spiritual health---not just physical health but spiritual health---for society is ***SICK SPIRITUALLY***. And that's the root cause. And that produces ill health ***PHYSICALLY*** and ***MORALLY*** and ***ECONOMICALLY*** and every other way.

Somebody was interviewed on the radio this morning. He's a docker and there are dockers in England who are now in the position where they are fully paid to do no work at all. Did you know? And they get a full pay---they get more than I do for doing no work at all. And this man was interviewed and said, "What do you think?" He said, "It's great. This is the dream of everybody. It's like winning the pools." He said, "I can do anything I want." He said, "Marvelous." A man who talks like that is ***SICK***. He's lost the image of God, because the image of God is of a God who ***WORKS***. *"My father works until now, and now I work,"* said Jesus. And we are called in the Bible to be ***WORKERS***. *"Six days shalt thou labor."* Be like God. Work six days a week and you're like God. It's a sobering thought. For those who press for a five---and even a four-day week--- be like God: *"Six days shalt thou labor."* Yes, you need rest, but take the amount of rest that ***GOD*** did: one day a week. That would be news for the unions, wouldn't it? And for the employers.

But you see, this is the sign of a ***SICK SOCIETY***, and God says, *"I will* ***HEAL****, I'll* ***CLEANSE*** *your guilt. Let's get the* ***SPIRITUAL*** *health right and then* ***MATERIAL*** *prosperity will flow.”* So that's step number ***ONE: RENEWED PROSPERITY***. Do you know what will follow from that? (Step number ***TWO***) ***RESOUNDING PRAISE***---the sounds of a happy holy city praising God.

I'll never forget when I went from West Berlin to East Berlin through checkpoint Charlie. Do you know the thing that struck me most? It wasn't the drab grayness, broken only by the large red posters. It was the ***SILENCE***...It was the silence. The sounds of laughter were not there. At first, I couldn't figure out what was wrong. I went into a cafe, and it was ***SILENT***. Now of course, West Berlin is gay in more senses than one, alas. It's a very exuberant city full of fun. But the ***CONTRAST*** was very marked. And you know in ***JERUSALEM*,** during the siege, there was just ***SILENCE***...as there was on the top of Masada during the last few months. ***SILENCE*** as people looked at the enemy over the walls. Jeremiah says, *"When the prosperity and the security come back, you'll hear* ***SINGING*** *and* ***MUSIC*** *and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride. And people will be happy to* ***SING*** *to God and come in gratitude and* ***GIVE THANKS*** *to the Lord, "For his steadfast love endureth forever."* There'll be the sounds of ***JOY*** in the city. Yes, we need ***PROSPERITY*** and ***SECURITY*** to ***SING***...to be ***HAPPY***. The Bible is sensible. It faces facts, but it says this is the way to restore ***SPIRITUAL HEALTH***, then ***MATERIAL PROSPERITY***, then a ***HAPPY CITY*** giving thanks to God, that God's love has brought it to pass.

God may need to take this country much, much lower. We may need a dose of Jeremiah one to 29 before we get through to this hopeful stage. But I'm beginning to have the ***FAITH*** that God will yet ***SAVE THIS NATION*** from the brink of disaster. I cannot pray for rain. One bishop in this land has already asked all clergy to offer prayers for rain. I can't. I'm afraid I've found myself reluctantly praying that the drought will go on and on and on. And my, any church that prays for drought is going to be regarded as a traitor and will have said to it what the king said to Elijah, *"You who are troubling Israel. Is it you?"* And Elijah said, *"No, I just stopped the rain. It's* ***YOU*** *that's troubling Israel."* And we may be called upon to say that, until the drought drives us to ***EACH OTHER*** for ***HELP***, and then to ***GOD*** for his ***MERCY***.

So, ***REDOUNDING PRAISE***---relationships, put right between man and man, and between man and God, so that there's happiness at the horizontal level. Bride and groom uniting, able to have their own ***HOME***, and to invest in a home and to have it in peace...to be able to afford a place of their own. It's a lovely picture, but bride and groom---not only with the house of their own, but going to the ***HOUSE OF GOD*** to praise. It's a glorious picture.

***How God Restores a Nation: Good Government, Real Religion***

Finally, there's one thing lacking. ***HOW*** can God possibly do such a thing? ***HOW*** can he get a nation on the right lines? Again, the answer is utterly ***SIMPLE***...utterly simple. Get the ***RIGHT*** ***LEADER*** and you're home and dry. And so, the last part of chapter 33 says that God is going to keep a ***PROMISE*** He made: that from the fallen ***STUMP***...from the cutoff ***STUMP*** of the tree of Jesse...from the fallen ***STUMP*** of the royal family, there will come a ***NEW SPROUT***! Walking in the Surrey woods, not long ago I saw such a thing. Somebody had cut an oak tree down. The original trunk was about this wide...and they'd cut the oak tree down. But from one side of the stump there had come a NEW oak tree, which was already about 15 feet high and becoming a beautiful tree. And it was replacing that which had been cut down. And God says, *"I will bring a* ***NEW SHOOT*** *from the root of David, a* ***RIGHTEOUS KING*** *who will deal justly with the people."* ***THAT*** is what is needed. If I talk about the ***OPPOSITE***, it'll bring it home to you. The opposite of ***RIGHTEOUS*** government is ***CORRUPT*** government. And how many lands in this world of ours have CORRUPT government at this moment? ***CORRUPT*** in all kinds of ways. But God says, *"I can put the whole thing straight, if I have a* ***RIGHTEOUS MAN*** *at the top of the nation. And so, I'm going to restore David---a son of David who will give* ***RIGHTEOUSNESS*** *to the government, who will straighten out the thing and cut out corruption."* Because, whenever there’s shortage of food and raging inflation, you get black market, you get corruption, you get all kinds of things. And it was all happening in Jerusalem. And Jeremiah sees in the ***FUTURE*** a new king of the line of David---not only the right ***POLITICAL*** leader, but God says, *"You need the right* ***RELIGIOUS*** *leaders too. And I will restore the priesthood of Levi."* Levi was meant to do more than produce jeans for the 20th century. Levi was meant to produce ***PRIESTS*** unto God. *"And so,"* says God, *"I'll produce the right* ***POLITICAL*** *leader and the right* ***RELIGIOUS*** *leaders; and the nation will get the right leadership both in the affairs of* ***GOVERMENT*** *and in the affairs of* ***RELIGION****.”*

What a nation needs to get right is ***GOOD GOVERNMENT*** and ***REAL RELIGION***. And so, this chapter ***FINISHES*** with a vision of new leaders in ***BOTH*** areas. It's an exciting vision. And God says, *"Why will I do that? Because I made a* ***PROMISE*** *that David would* ***NEVER*** *lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel, and the Levitical priesthood would* ***NEVER*** *lack a man to offer offerings."* Now just a moment, just stop and look at that. That's God's ***PROMISE***. And God says this, *"If you can stop the day and the night coming, then you could stop this happening. I made a* ***COVENANT*** *with day and night, that day would follow night, and day would follow night. And it always does. If you could stop that, then you can stop me sending David the king back."* What a statement!! Why does he dare to say it? Because God is ***CREATOR*** as well as ***REDEEMER***. And therefore, he can draw from nature his own arguments. And he says, *"Do you see the stars, you see the heaven and the earth? I have set the* ***EARTH*** *in space, and I have set the* ***HEAVENS*** *in space. If you can reorder the planets, then you can stop me sending David and Levi back."* What an argument. They're hoping to land just a tiny bit of scrap metal on Mars today. God says, *"If you can shift Mars out of orbit, then you can stop me fulfilling my word."* Doesn't our little bit of machinery look ***PUNY*** beside the God who put Mars into orbit? And ***THAT*** God says, *"As* ***CERTAINLY*** *as day follows night, as* ***CERTAINLY*** *as I made my laws for space and the heavenly bodies and planet earth---as* ***CERTAINLY*** *as that---I will bring* ***BACK*** *David and Levi."*

And we know this morning, and we rejoice this morning, that David and Levi came back in ***ONE MAN***---and the name was Jesus. Born in royal David's city, of the line of David---with the ***LEGAL*** right to the throne through his (earthly) ***FATHER***, and the ***PHYSICAL*** right to the throne through his ***MOTHER*** (Mary)---came the son of David, the ***KING*** who was yet a ***PRIEST*** unto God to offer Him his own life. But just a moment, there's a little bit of a GAP between the prediction and the fulfillment here. God says to Jeremiah, *"As* ***MANY*** *as the* ***STARS*** *and as many as the* ***SAND*** *on the seashore will be the descendants of David on the throne and the priests of Levi."* And yet this was fulfilled in ***ONE*** man. There's a gap. How do we close the gap? Very simply, he has made US to be kings and priests in Christ. ***WE*** are the ***FULFILLMENT***---this morning, sitting here--- of Jeremiah 33, or at least part of the fulfillment.

Does that excite you? ***WE*** are one. ***YOU*** are one. We are some of a thousand million kings and priests in Christ. He's made us kings and priests, and we shall reign with him, and we shall offer offerings to God with him. And, in Christ, WE are going to be more than the ***STARS***, more than the ***SAND***...kings and priests to our God, a multitude that no man can number. No wonder we can lift up our heads. They may lock us in prison, they may send us to Siberia, they may shut us in a dungeon, but ***OUR HEARTS ARE NOT BOUND***. And there are many Christians this morning who are in prison cells because they dare to believe, but they are ***PRISONERS OF HOPE***. If they had money, they would invest it in ***HEAVEN*** because their ***FAITH*** is so sure of the ***FUTURE***. When the ***OUTLOOK*** is bad, try the ***UPLOOK***.

From that prison cell, in which all may appear to be so black, in which the ***FLESH*** says, "It's hopeless, it's all over...disaster is so near...the city is besieged...everything's going to be lost---in that situation, you look up. And as in the last book in the Bible ...that was another book that came out of a ***PRISON CELL*** on a Sunday morning: *"I, John was in Patmos,"*... and he was in ***PRISON*** on an island, banished from his churches. And he looked up and he saw ***A DOOR OPENED INTO HEAVEN***. And he went through it, and he came ***BACK*** into his prison cell with ***HOPE***---***A PRISONER OF HOPE***!! So, Jeremiah, with all his doubts, put his money in a field because he ***BELIEVED*** that the ***FORTUNES*** of his nation would be ***RESTORED*** by God to the praise of His name.

Let us pray. Father, what a future you've given us in Christ. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Lord, thank you that one day the whole world will be ours. The title deeds will be in our hands. We shall be heirs of the whole universe, joint heirs with Christ, kings and priests to you. It's breathtaking. And so, Lord, we pray that you will help us each to call upon you, that we may hear your secrets and put our money where it should be put. And may we again be ready to give to every man who asks us, a reason for the hope that fills our breast. In Jesus name, amen.

Hymn number 406. And I put the poster up on the wall to remind you of the city, the city called *'the City of Peace'*, Yerushalem, Shalem Shalom. 406, Jerusalem.

***SINGING*** (3 Minutes)