

Applying Some Old Testament Passages

Jeremiah 29:11-14 - 11 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord,' plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. 12 'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 'And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 'And I will be found by you,' declares the Lord,' and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the Lord,' and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.' NASB

- 1) Not specific to each recipient but rather to the whole group of exiles.
- 2) Its promise of prosperity applies generally to those who are reading it at the time of its writing, but specifically to the generation who will be alive 70 years from the writing of this letter... v-12- 14. I shall deliver you 70 years from now as a whole group of people but first you must endure 70 years of captivity in Babylon. **See verse 10**, Jer 29:10 - 10 "For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.
- 3) We can learn of God's attitude even in the midst of judgment that He is mindful of mercy toward His people who are in covenant with Him, the covenant faithfulness of God. In this sense there is a general application to people who are in covenant with God that God is mindful to bless and prosper those to whom He has made promise to and is obligated to according to the terms of His covenant with them. We learn of God's faithfulness and that has a general application to all whom he has promised, both for good and for discipline.
 - a. People whom come to God in Christ can learn hence that God is mindful toward the welfare even when he is in the midst of bringing about serious discipline and judgment upon those who He loves and is committed to in covenant. How much more to those who abide in obedience to Him. But even this is NOT a promise for material and earthly prosperity in this life.

- b. Also, there is a general principle at work whereby God promises to be found by those who seek Him. This is generally true to all people, but **specifically** true for the **exiles**.
- 4) Misapplication – (out of context, misapplied meaning to people to whom it was not intended)
 - a. God has plans to prosper anyone under any circumstances because He is good. This is folly for obvious reasons. Example; God is not predisposed to prosper someone who has rejected the Gospel but in fact has plans to destroy them ultimately for the rejection of His manifested love toward them that is available in Christ.
 - b. (Presuming we know the mind of God concerning His Providence for someone specifically based on a general attribute of His character) - Because I am a Christian, God intends to prosper me in an earthly physical sense because of His love for me in Christ. Example; God may not in fact prosper you in an earthly physical sense in this life because He may have other plans for your life that include suffering and poverty or even martyrdom. The promise of glorification for the believer is absolute, but is not realized in this life.... ie; the Apostles, John on Patmos, Peter’s crucifixion, etc...

2 Chronicles 7:14- 14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. NASB

- 1) In its context this is a promise specifically to that nation of Israel, who at the time was a united kingdom of 12 tribes, that God would hear and answer a prayer of forgiveness after they had fallen under His judgment for their stubborn disobedience. It is a specific promise to those who would offer the prayer “in this place,” verse 15.
- 2) Misapplication (out of context) - This verse is often quoted by people claiming that the US is a Christian nation and the problem with America is the church has turned “wicked” and sinned against God. Therefore if the Church will repent, God will once again heal and prosper the nation of the US. This is a gross misapplication of this text which contains no such

promise to some set of circumstances imagined by those who make such claims. This misapplication takes this verse completely out of context and misapplies it to a people to who it was not spoken, about a set of circumstances imagined by the one misapplying. There are many variations of the misapplication of the text but you can see the folly of it from this example.

Genre and its distinctions

Proverbs express general truths and maximums for wise living. They are not unequivocal promises meant to give absolute results in regard to the general comparisons made. They are generally true and to be heeded as such.

Proverbs 22:6 - 6 Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it. NASB

- 1) It is generally true that if you raise a child with certain set of morals and values that they will grow up and live according to those principles later in life. It is certainly not an absolute reality and many examples that this is not true abound all around us. Even the wise Solomon himself went astray and had over 700 wives who led him astray into wicked idolatry.
- 2) Misapplication (misuse of genre) – I raised my child in a “Christian” home and according to my Christian faith, therefore when he/she grows old they will become a Christian, and live according to my moral standards. This is of course generally true, but certainly not specifically true of all people in every circumstance.
 - a. People don’t get saved because their parents raised them right. They get saved because God chooses to save them by grace. If you got saved based on how your parents raised you, most of us would be doomed, not saved.
 - b. We often have over glorified views of the quality of our own parenting. Need I say more?
 - c. All people are sinners by nature and will to large degree sin and violate God’s will regardless of how they were raised. This does not mean that this Proverb is not generally true, surely it is, but in a

general sense. It is NOT an unequivocal promise of the morality of our children because we employed certain moral standards in the rearing.

Psalms are typically meant for the purpose of praising and extolling the glory of God and His attributes. They are to *typically* meant to encourage by way of reciting and singing of the goodness of God and expressing truths about Him in a general nature. At times they can make prophetic statements of absolute nature, however they are normally meant to express worship or emotional overflow from the human heart in all circumstances including suffering, despair, depression, happiness, praise, thanksgiving and otherwise. They frequently include hyperbole and exuberant expressions in symbolic words and phrases. They need to be understood with the considerations according to their *genre*.

Psalm 103:2-5 - 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; 3 Who pardons all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases; 4 Who redeems your life from the pit; Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; 5 Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle. NASB

- 1) This psalm is a hymn or song which celebrates God love, compassion and covenant faithfulness to His people. It contains many expressions of the goodness of God in a general and also a specific sense. It is to be understood according to its nature as a Psalm.
- 2) Misapplication (misuse of genre) – God will heal every disease I will ever get. If this were true, we would never die. The folly of this statement is obvious. It is entirely irrational to assume that based on this psalm which is meant as an expression generally of the goodness of God to draw sweeping specific applications like because of this verse God will therefore heal me of this cancer that I have been afflicted with.
 - a. God may heal you of cancer. He may do it supernaturally, or with the aid of doctors and medicine. 99.9% of cancer survivors He has chosen to heal with the latter. Many fine Christian people die of cancer every day, which by the way for them is the ultimate healing.