

The Plans of God

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon reminds us that God has a good plan for our lives, which we must believe, pray for, and praise Him for, regardless of our circumstances.

Duration: 22:25

Scripture: Psalm 37:4, Psalm 119:49, Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 29:11-14, Matthew 7:7

Topics: "Will Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God has a plan for every day of our lives, regardless of our age, background, or race. He encourages believers to trust in God's plan, even in difficult and uncertain times. The preacher draws inspiration from the story of Peter walking on water and reminds listeners that faith is essential in pleasing God. He also references the prophet Jeremiah and how God had a plan to bless the Jews even during their captivity. The sermon emphasizes the importance of believing in God's plans for our lives and seeking Him wholeheartedly through prayer.

Transcript

Some verses in the Bible get a life of their own and become slogans that Christians use. All Scripture is inspired by God, but some have a season of popularity. A couple of decades ago, the prayer of Jabez from the Old Testament was huge.

Remember the book? Everybody was praying the prayer of Jabez. And then there's God is good all the time. When you say to someone, God is good, they give you the bump and they go all the time, right? There's another verse now in the last 10 years, I think, seems to me, that has taken on a life of its own.

It's mentioned over and over and over and over again. Sometimes in a wrong way, televangelists hawking money in an unbiblical way. But then of course, it's from Scripture, so it has a great truth to it.

Let's see if we can pick it up here, reading in the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah 29. Let's look. This is what the Lord of heaven's armies, the God of Israel says.

Do not let your prophets and fortune tellers who are with you in the land of Babylon trick you. Do not listen to their dreams because they are telling you lies in my name. I have not sent them.

By the way, just notice that the people of Israel who are in Babylon, we'll get to that in a moment. There were prophets and fortune tellers among the people and they were tricking the people. Probably had to do

with money.

Do not listen to their dreams. They were having dreams, but they weren't from God because they're telling you lies. Notice they were prophets and they were speaking in the name of the Lord, but they were telling lies in his name.

I have not sent them, says the Lord. This is what the Lord says. You will be in Babylon for 70 years, but then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised and I will bring you home again.

And here comes the verse. For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. How many have ever heard that verse? Mention, say amen.

They are plans for good and not for disaster. To give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen.

If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you, says the Lord. I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes.

After you pray and you claim that promise, I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and I will bring you home again to your own land. There's an old saying that a text from the Bible without the context is a pretext to try to prove something that might not be true. For every text, there's a context.

Who was it talking to? What were the circumstances? Then you understand what it meant and then you hopefully apply it to your own life. So this is a very strange moment for God to say, I know the plans I have for you. Because Israel, Judah I should say, the kingdom of the south, was in captivity.

Let's review that. The northern kingdom had already gone into captivity to the Assyrians 150 or so years earlier. But Judah didn't learn from its cousins and they continued worshiping idols, Baal, Asherah, Molech, all these terrible things.

God sent prophets and warned them and said, don't do that, worship me. I'm the one who brought you out of Egypt. Why do you love someone other than me? Get rid of these idols because they're not only dishonoring me, they're gonna bring you trouble.

Everything seems now great, but when you turn your back on me and you go away from me, you're gonna reap trouble. And because I love you, that's why I sent prophets to warn you. Not trying to rain on your parade, I'm trying to give you a parade.

I want you to rejoice, but you can't rejoice your way. You have to rejoice in the path I gave you. They didn't listen.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonians, encircled Jerusalem after many warnings and Judah was captured. Jerusalem had the temple that they were so proud of. In fact, they used to yell, we have the temple.

Oh, the temple, see the temple. We're the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We have the temple.

And God had warned them through Jeremiah, stop saying the temple, the temple. The temple doesn't mean anything when you're worshiping idols. There's no good luck charms called the temple or going to church on Sunday or anything.

I'm the God who searches your heart. I know when you love me and honor me. I know when you don't.

So now the temple was destroyed. The walls of Jerusalem were knocked down, leaving it very vulnerable. And the people were put into captivity.

What Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians did was they left some people in the land, very few, minority, and then they spread out, especially the leaders and promising young men, they spread them out through the Babylonian empire, which was north, northeast of Israel. So men like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and? Daniel. They all went into captivity.

Prophets like Ezekiel ended up in captivity. So they're spread out through the Babylonian empire. And now with the walls down, hardly anyone in Judea, with the temple destroyed, now God says, I know the plans I have for you, plans to bless you, prosper you, and help you.

And in the natural mind, you would say, what? Now you're telling me you have plans for us? Look at the mess we're in. It's from our own disobedience, but what a mess. Jeremiah, though, tells him, now look, you're gonna be in captivity 70 years.

That's not the first time it's mentioned in the Old Testament. God had said, I'm gonna put you in captivity for 70 years. I'm gonna bring you back.

They're in captivity, and God reveals a little bit of his plan for them. You're in captivity, you'll be there for a while, but then I'm gonna bring you back. I know the plans that I have for you.

I have plans to bless you and prosper you. Doesn't matter how it looks around you. Doesn't matter what people say.

Doesn't matter who's against you, who's for you. Nothing matters how you were raised, what someone did to you. None of that is stronger than God saying, I have plans for your life.

I have purposes, can we say amen to that? I have a plan, I have a purpose. What Jesus is telling us in the New Testament is always, I have a plan for you. Let's update it to our era that we live in.

We're not Israelites, we're not living in Babylon. But Peter, after he failed the Lord, denied him three times, Jesus, in ministering to him, tells him, Peter, I have plans for you. I know, but I'm ashamed to even look at you.

I know, but I have plans for you. I have purposes for you. My purposes for you don't change because you messed up.

I have plans for you, isn't that a good thing to know? I have purposes and plans for your life. Don't look at others, don't look inside at yourself. Look at me and believe that I have a plan for your life.

I wanna say this to everyone. Many Christians live like a leaf blowing in the wind. They have anxiety, they have nervousness, they're susceptible to depression, why? They are not cemented to the promise that God has a plan for my life.

God has a plan for you, sir, and for you, ma'am. God has a plan, as sure as he had a plan for Jeremiah and the people of Israel, and the apostle Peter, and the apostle Paul, God has a plan for your life. And the hardest thing that Jesus faced was getting people to believe his promises and his power.

Study the Gospels. He went about saying things and promising things, but oh, it was hard to get people to believe and say, yes, Lord, I receive that. I embrace it.

I open my heart and I wrap my arms around it. You are not a man that you should lie. This is what you said, and I believe it.

Doubt and unbelief says, yeah, but look at your situation. Look how you've messed up. And the minute you look away from God and his promise, you're gonna get shaky.

But as long as you keep your eyes on the Lord and keep telling him, I believe, come on, let's say amen to that, I believe, I believe, I believe. Say it with me, I believe, I believe, I believe. And many times we look away from the Lord.

It's like when Jesus was out walking on the water and he said to Peter, come to me on the water. Jesus said, if it's you, Lord, call me. He said, come, and he's walking on the water.

And as long as he looked at the Lord and kept his eyes on his master and stood on that promise that he called me there, he was doing great. But the wind came. Some big waves came around him, took his eyes off the Lord and said, yo, what am I doing out on this lake? What is this about? And the minute he looked, he began to sink.

And Jesus said to him, oh, Peter, why didn't you believe? So I wanna tell you something today. I don't care how old you are, what your background is, what race you are. I don't care who did what to whom.

I don't care he said, she said. I don't care about failures in your life. God has a plan.

And listen, that plan includes today. If God has a plan for my life and my life is made up of days, then obviously God has a plan for every day. Otherwise he won't work out his plan for my life.

This is what many of us do when the verse becomes a slogan. Help me, Lord, to explain this. God has a plan.

I know the plans that he has for me. I know, but that has to be made up of everyday living. He has a plan for today, where you should go, where you should not go, who you should talk to, who you should not talk to.

When you talk to someone, how should you talk to them? Where you should make a plan to travel, how you react to people who come to you. There's a plan for every day of my life. When you wake up in the morning tomorrow, you gotta say, God has a plan for my life and God has a plan for Monday, the 8th of October.

Otherwise there's no plan for my life. If there's not a plan for my day, how will he work out the plan for my life? We must believe that, no matter how sideways life seems, no matter how disappointed you are, no matter how heartbroken you are, no matter how unlikely it seems, Lord, we're in captivity. Now you're saying you have a plan.

We're in captivity, the temple is destroyed, the walls are down, we have no army, we're totally vulnerable, and now you're saying, Jeremiah, no, thus sayeth the Lord, I have a plan for you to bless you. Oh God, help us to believe his plan for our life. Help us to believe his plan.

I said this earlier, I wanna say it now, I don't want confrontation or argument with anybody here about doctrinal things. I'm just stating to you, you can see if God bears witness in your heart that I'm telling the truth, I am telling the truth. But as I saw Carol leading these people, especially now, they put a light on her so the mass choir could see her.

I thought of that and I'm praising God and I thought of how we began, I don't mean began in the ministry, how we began. Did you know that when we got married, I was in the business world working for an airline, Carol was working for a drug company as a receptionist in the city, we knew each other from childhood, and then we got married. At our wedding, we were both Christians, she was a pastor's daughter, I was not a strong Christian in college, but then I began to seek the Lord.

But now we have a wedding and we pray, Jesus, come to our wedding. You know, if Jesus comes to your wedding, it's a good wedding. Doesn't matter what the bride is wearing, doesn't matter about rubber chicken and cold peas, it doesn't matter, it's a good wedding.

So we're at the reception of our wedding at a basement 20 minutes from here in Bay Ridge, and there were 100 people there or so. And while we're at the reception, someone sings, it was that song, fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more.

Fill my cup, I lift it up. Suddenly, as we're in this reception, the presence of the Lord just descends upon us, just like we felt while this choir was singing. This is not something we planned, we planned that someone would sing, but only God can add those special moments.

And then suddenly a woman walked from her table up to us, we're all broken and praying, and she begins to speak in tongues over us. And this certainly was not planned in our reception. And then someone came and interpreted and began to prophesy over this young man back then and his shy, scared wife who wouldn't speak publicly if you paid her \$100.

You see what she just did here and took the mic and talked, are you kidding me? She would hardly say hello and make eye contact with people. You don't know that part. And they began to speak over us.

You're gonna travel here, you're gonna go here, and you, Carol, will influence thousands, and you, Jim, will influence thousands of people. And saying things about God's purpose for our life, when we ended up on our honeymoon, we looked at each other and we just said, what was that about? That's impossible. We're not in the ministry.

We're not anything. We're nobody. She's shy and untrained.

I didn't go to seminary. I mean, what in the world? But God began to make real to us, will you believe me? Will you trust me? No, you say it's impossible. But with me, all things are possible.

Will you believe my purpose and my plan for you? I don't have a plan to hurt you. I have a plan to bless you and make you a blessing. Will you believe? Everything that person said that day through the Spirit, I believe, no one will argue with anyone, has come true.

And we were the least likely two people in the universe that those two things could have been said about. Not promising, not gifted, me especially. Her, she has her gifting, which you know.

But I mean, it's impossible. No, when God says, I know the plans for you, what he says, we can receive and depend on it, that he has a plan. Will you believe that up there in the balcony behind me? Would you please, look, look at me.

Would you please believe it? Please, in the name of Christ. Would you believe that God has a plan for your life? He has a plan for today. It's such a good plan.

You don't even know it. Listen, sometimes he reveals the plan. He kind of did to us.

He did to the Jews. You're gonna be 70 years in captivity, then I'm gonna bring you back. Other times, it's just an intimation.

It's just a sense. God has this plan. I'm gonna go somewhere or I'm gonna do something, but I don't know what, but there's just a sense.

His hand is on me. He's gonna bless me and use me. I know he's gonna do this.

He's gonna bring that daughter back. He's gonna bring that son back. He has plans for my family to bless me and help me.

You have to believe because without faith, it's impossible to please God. You have to believe. We have to believe.

And this goes further to contradict the sloganeering that we Christians fall into with no thought of how God works. You not only have to believe, you have to pray it. Remember what he said? In that day when I fulfill this, you will call upon me and I will answer you and I'll do what you say.

What will I do? What I promise. You have to pray the promise. You don't throw up your hands and go, oh, God said it, he'll do it, that settles it.

You gotta pray the very thing God said. You not only have to believe it, you now have to ask for it. Listen, this is how prayer works in its deepest sense.

God gives a promise or a word to you and then will you believe it? Now pray it, pray it. Say back to me, God do as you said. Or as the Psalmist says in Psalm 119.49, remember your word to your servant for you have given me hope.

If God gave a word, why do you have to pray about it? Because that's what God says. I'm gonna be a partner in fulfilling this word with you. I'm not gonna do it while you sit on the sofa with the remote.

You're gonna call upon me and I will answer you and then people will know it's not by accident. No, I promised it, you prayed it and then I'm gonna fulfill it. Come on, everybody say amen to that.

God has a plan for our lives. He has a plan for today. It doesn't matter how things seem.

If you go by emotions, you're gonna be fluctuating up and down like a yo-yo. It has nothing to do with what we see, what other people say, how we feel, how we failed. It has to do with I know the plans that I have for you.

And by the way, if you're here today, because we all get full of ourselves and want our plans to be fulfilled, that's the new theology of today. Very, very, very dangerous. I make my own plans and then make God

fulfill my plan.

No, then you become the center, I become the center. No, God is the center. Jesus is the center of the universe.

It's his plans. And trust me, when you go after his plans to believe it and to pray it, you find out that his plan is so much better than anything you could think or ask or imagine. One last little amen here for that, okay? So last word, you have to believe God's plan.

You have to receive it, claim it, stand on it, no matter what you see, feel, and what others say. Number two, you gotta pray it. You gotta pray the thing, the very thing God said.

That is counterintuitive, but it's true. You have to ask God for the very thing he has said. You know what it's distilled down to in the New Testament? Lord, do as you promised.

Find out how Daniel and others prayed. Lord, do as you promised. Wait a minute, if God promised it, it's gonna happen? No, Lord, do, I'm praying, I'm following up, I'm acting on your promise.

And then it'll surely come to pass. Lastly, you gotta praise God for his plan for your life. You not only have to believe it and pray it, you have to praise him for it.

Now, most of us wait till it's fulfilled, and then we give glory to God, and we praise God, and we say, God, thank you. You promised it, I received it, I prayed it, and now it has come to pass, now I give you praise. And that's right.

Some of us here ought to be praising God so loud that we'd be louder than all those voices singing up here. How many have found God faithful in your own life, bringing to pass that which he's promised? But can I just leave you with this? The sweetest praise is not after he does it, it's before he does it, is to say, God, I so believe in your purpose for my life. I so believe that you have a plan not to hurt me.

You're gonna bless me. I haven't even seen 110th of your blessing yet that you have in store for me. And I pray it, you know I brought it to you, so now, even though it hasn't happened yet, I'm gonna praise you.

I'm in Babylon, and I don't see any of this yet, but because God said it, and I know his purpose is a good purpose, Lord, I'm gonna praise you sometimes even though tears are rolling down my eyes, because you know what I'm going through, God. You know what I'm going through. But I praise you anyway.

I'm not gonna let what I see or don't see stop praise going up to you. I praise you just based on your faithfulness. God is a good God.

God is a good God. Let's say amen to that. Lord, thank you for your word.

Now help us to believe and receive your plan for our life. No matter what we see, no matter what we feel, we believe in your faithfulness today, and your love for us, that it's a good plan. Help us to live it out day by day.

Help us not just to believe, but to pray it, to claim it, to say to you, do as you said, Lord. Do as you said, Lord. You have spoken, now fulfill.

Help us to praise you not after we see it, but even before we see your fulfillment, Lord. Help us to be filled with honor and glory and praise to your name. Thank you for blessing us and all these our visitors and giving us such a sweet meeting.

We pray now your peace be on us the rest of the day. We pray it in Christ's name. And everyone said, amen.

Turn around and hug somebody, give somebody a handshake. Come on, say hello to someone.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28702.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jim-cymbala/the-plans-of-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net