

## THE CHURCH IN CAPTIVITY

(Deut. 4:23-31)

### Introduction:

1. The context of this passage is Moses' admonition to the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation about to enter and take possession of the promised land of Canaan. If they turned from God they would return to captivity, but if they remembered Him while back in captivity He would remember them and deliver them yet again
2. God's people have found themselves in captivity many times due to their unfaithfulness. The solution to captivity is always the same. Seek God and obey His voice.
3. Let us this morning consider: Israel in captivity; the early church in captivity; and us today in captivity.

### Discussion:

#### I. Israel in Captivity.

- A. Israel's captivity was a punishment for unfaithfulness (Deut. 28:64 = 2 Chron. 36:17).
- B. Israel was commanded by God to live their lives in captivity (Jer. 29:4-7, 10-14).
- C. God's people were expected to live as God's people, even in captivity.
  1. Daniel would not defile himself with unclean foods/drinks and he was rewarded by God providentially (Dan. 1:8, 19).
  2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed Nego refused to worship an idol and God saved them and rewarded them (Dan. 3:8-18, 28-30).
  3. Daniel's enemies knew the only way to attack him was by putting his faith and Babylon at odds, but even then God saved Daniel and rewarded him (Dan. 6:5, 28).
  4. When the Jews were targeted for destruction under the Persians, God acted providentially to supply them with a savior and reward them (Esth. 3:8; 8:11; 10:3).

#### II. Early Christians in Captivity.

- A. The "captivity" the early Christians found themselves in was not a result of a punishment (save a continuation of Israel's punishment) but a result of the corruption of the world within which they found themselves. They were actually supposed to be the potential cure for the ills of the world.
- B. The apostles detailed how Christians were to relate with their non-Christian civic leaders (Rom. 13:1-7ff; 1 Pet. 2:9-17).
- C. But even this was just a proper application of the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:13-16).
- D. The early Christians were to be a positive influence, a godly influence, on a world lost in darkness (Eph. 5:8-17).

#### III. The Church in Captivity Today.

- A. We, like the early Christians find ourselves living in an ungodly world pursuing ungodly things. We are not being punished, but instead we are called to be the cure (the light) for the present sickness (darkness) of our world. There is a reason the United States of America has been such a force for good in the world, and has made the lives of the entire world better; she was founded on Christian principles and blessed by God.
- B. Unfortunately, America has turned from those principles, so that the church in America finds itself once again in captivity. What are we to do?
  1. As with the early church, we are to obey the civil governments (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:9-17) as long as it does not conflict with the commands of God (Acts 5:29).
  2. We are to be the salt and light of this country just as the early church was for their countries.
  3. Jas. 1:27, sums it up so nicely. We are to do good and remain unspotted by the evils of the world.

### Conclusion:

1. "If we laugh at the profane; idolize the godless; entertain ourselves with the obscene; and fail to walk out on the indecent; do we dare claim to be holy children of God?"—Steve Higginbotham.
2. In other words, if the church is not light or salt, is it the church of our Holy Lord? The where, what and when do not determine the church's who or whose.
3. Invitation.

## MORE ON “THE CHURCH IN CAPTIVITY”

1. It would be nice to live in a world where all were Christian and living the Law of Christ. It would also be nice to eat dessert before dinner, and to relax before doing the chores. But, the reality is, one works before the rest. The dessert is the reward for suffering through the lima beans☺
  - A. Consider the Sabbath, a day of rest after a week of work (Ex. 20:8-11).
  - B. Consider the Christians Sabbath, heavenly reward after a life of work for the Lord (Heb. 3:7-4:11).
  
2. In many ways the church entering into captivity can be seen as a spiritual blessing.
  - A. It is easy to be lax and undisciplined when in a bubble of righteousness.
  - B. It is more difficult to be godly when those around us are not. It requires more determination and effort. We have to make a stand for our faith. We have to make hard choices, unpopular with the culture within which we live. We get isolated and often ostracized. We get slandered and attacked (John 15:18-25; Matt. 5:11, 12). Many times we are as sheep for the slaughter killed all day long (Rom. 8:36, 37). We become purified by fire (1 Pet. 1:7), and our faith perfected by trials (Jas. 1:2-4).
  - C. And yet, light shines ever so much brighter in darkness. Goodness and righteousness are more evident in a world of evil and lawlessness. We will attract more attention than we would otherwise (and much of that attention will be negative attention, but remember point B above) in order to fulfill our purpose (Matt. 5:13-16; 1 Pet. 3:15).
  
3. The question is, will we be the church in captivity or will we “go native”. Will we continue to follow Jesus or will we begin to follow the world, the culture within which we live? Paul gave us godly advice in Rom. 12:1, 2 and we should follow his instruction/example.

**LIVE CHRIST-  
LIKE LIVES!**