

# YOU

**Sermon Series: When Emotions Rise**

**To be used with: Session 3: Embracing Joy**

**Sermon Title Possibilities: A Hope that Never Fails**

**Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study *“When Emotions Rise,”* these sermon outlines will follow the same theme as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

**Introduction:** I was six years old when Vice-President Spiro Agnew resigned his office. I don’t remember much about him, but I must confess that over the past several months, I’ve gained a new appreciation for his famous comment about “the nattering nabobs of negativism.” He made that comment during the 1970 midterm elections, and he was referring to the opponents of President Nixon’s administration. In the last few several months, that famous phrase has come to my mind quite a bit, especially when I listen to the news. It seems all they want to report is doom and gloom. I don’t deny the reality of the Coronavirus, and I agree some precautions are needed. Still, some people seem like they are obsessively pessimistic. In contrast to the words of an old song, they seem like they want to accentuate the negative and eliminate the positive!

In all fairness, we can’t deny that the prophet Jeremiah was quite negative. There’s a reason he was called “the weeping prophet.” For some thirty years, he had warned the people of Judah of a coming judgment on their nation. I’m sure many people told him, “Come on, Jeremiah! Why do you always talk about sin and judgment and the wrath of God? Don’t you have any good news for us?” As a matter of fact, Jeremiah did! He had already told the people that God was still in control, and that He would someday allow them to return to their homeland. Here in chapter 31, He carried it a step further. He promised He would make a new covenant with Israel and forgive their sins. The book of Hebrews tells us this new covenant was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **1) The cause of the new covenant.**

- a) They needed a new covenant because they had broken the old covenant.
  - i) God specified the “house of Israel” and the “house of Judah”.
    - (1) After King Solomon’s death, the northern ten tribes pulled away from the rest of the nation and formed a separate kingdom.
    - (2) The Northern Kingdom (Israel) had been destroyed by the Assyrian Empire in 721 B.C.
    - (3) Jeremiah warned the Southern Kingdom (Judah) that they would soon face a similar fate.
  - ii) Why was Israel under God’s judgment?
    - (1) He had made a covenant with the Israelites when He first delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

- (2) God had kept His end of the covenant, but the people of Israel had not kept theirs.
- b) How does this apply to us?
  - i) We may not be in a covenant relationship with God in the same way as Israel, but we have still sinned against Him.
    - (1) Nature itself gives enough evidence that God exists.
    - (2) Human beings have a natural sense of right and wrong, and we also
    - (3) have a sense of our own imperfection (Romans 3:23).
  - ii) Because we have sinned against God, we are under His judgment.
    - (1) Because we have all sinned, we will die.
    - (2) We will answer to God for our sins.

## **2) The contents of the new covenant.**

- a) It would be very different from the old covenant.
  - i) God's laws were written on tablets of stone.
    - (1) Before Moses brought the law down from Mount Sinai, the people had already broken His commandment about graven images.
    - (2) By the time of Jeremiah, idolatry and wickedness had become rampant among the Israelites.
  - ii) The new covenant would be written on people's hearts.
    - (1) God would put His Spirit in them.
    - (2) People would obey Him because they wanted to obey Him.
- b) When did this new covenant take effect?
  - i) The book of Hebrews says it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:6-13).
    - (1) He secured the new covenant with His death on the cross.
    - (2) He made final atonement for our sins.
      - (a) I usually read Jeremiah 31:31-34 whenever our church partakes of the Lord's Supper. When Jesus took the Last Supper with His disciples, He said the cup represented the "new testament," or new covenant, in His blood. He was telling His disciples, "Do you remember what Jeremiah said about a new covenant? I'm going to secure that covenant with my own blood!"
  - ii) He has put His laws on our hearts.
    - (1) He has not given us new rules, but a new nature (2 Cor. 5:17).
    - (2) Many Christians talk about having "standards." When you keep your eyes on Jesus, the standards will take care of themselves!

## **3) The consequences of the new covenant.**

- a) People would have a new knowledge of God.
  - i) The Israelites thought they already knew God.
    - (1) They knew who God was, but they didn't really know Him.
    - (2) The veil of the temple, covering the Holy of Holies, symbolized separation between God and His people.
  - ii) Through Jesus, we have direct access to God.
    - (1) When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn away, symbolizing that God and man were now reconciled.
    - (2) We now have direct access to God.

- (a) When I was a teenager, I read a book called *My Life Without God*. It was written by William J. Murray, son of the infamous atheist Madlyn Murray O'Hair. His mother had a very deep hatred for God, and she passed that hatred along to him. As he grew to adulthood, he began to question what he had been taught. In 1980, he came to know Jesus as his Savior. He told how his perspective on God changed: "God was no longer a distant, impersonal 'force.' I now knew Him in a personal way."
- b) We have forgiveness of sins.
  - i) The people of Israel had sinned terribly against God.
    - (1) They knew better, but they disobeyed Him anyway.
    - (2) They deserved God's punishment, but He promised to show them mercy through this new covenant.
  - ii) That same mercy is available to us.
    - (1) You may be a good person by the world's standards, but God's standard is the one that counts.
    - (2) We have failed God miserably, but we can find full forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

**Conclusion:** I get a lot of sermon illustrations from the comic strip "Peanuts." Many of the Sunday strips depicted Charlie Brown and his friend Peppermint Patty sitting under a tree discussing various issues. If you'll recall, Charlie Brown had a crush on a certain little red-haired girl. Peppermint Patty told Charlie Brown she was worried about him. She said, "I think you live in the past too much. You haven't seen that little red-haired girl in over a year, yet you still talk about her." Charlie Brown said, "Maybe I'm living in the future. Maybe it's what we call 'hope'. Or maybe I'm just too wishy-washy to forget her." Peppermint Patty said, "I don't know Chuck. I just hate to see you always living in the past. Of course, I'd hate to see you only living in the future, too. Maybe, as they always say, the truth lies somewhere in between." Then Charlie Brown made a rather profound comment. He said, "The truth is just as wishy-washy as I am."

As I've gotten older, I've come to understand what Charlie Brown meant. We live in a world that is constantly changing. People tell you different things, and you don't know who to believe. Simply put, we live in a wishy-washy world! Aren't you glad to know this world is not your final home? When your earthly life comes to an end, He'll take you home to be with Him, and you'll live with Him forever. This world is filled with false and unrealistic hopes, but through Jesus Christ, you can have a hope that never fails.

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