



"Don't forget until too late that the business of life is not business but living."

—B.C. Forbes

18-Oct-13

Baruch and His Wrong Priorities

As part of His message in the [Sermon on the Mount](#), [Jesus](#) encourages His disciples to understand the relationship between them and [God](#) the Father as an intimate, familial one. He begins the passage by saying in [Matthew 7:7](#): "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

The translators of *The Amplified Bible* correctly understand the intent of Christ's comments in [Matthew 7:7](#). Like a son beseeching his father, we are to be persistent, to keep on: "Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking [reverently] and [the door] will be opened to you."

To Baruch, who served as the prophet Jeremiah's scribe at the time of Judah's fall to the Babylonians, God had something far different to say: "But as for you, do you seek great things for yourself? Stop seeking!" ([Jeremiah 45:5](#), *Holman Christian Standard Bible*).

What was Baruch doing that elicited such a terse rebuke from God? Driven by [covetousness](#), he was seeking great things for *himself*. In [Jeremiah 45:4](#),

God reminds Baruch that He is in the process of judging the people of Judah: "Behold, what I have built I will break down, and what I have planted I will pluck up, that is, this whole land." God was about to carry out what He promised through the prophet Isaiah decades earlier, as recorded in [Isaiah 5:5](#). There, He likens His people to a choice vineyard. He was about to "take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down."

As Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch was certainly aware of God's promised protection to the prophet during those turbulent times, recorded for us in [Jeremiah 1:17-19](#). God tells Jeremiah:

"Therefore prepare yourself and arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, lest I dismay you before them. For behold, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, against its princes, against its priests, and against the people of the land. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you," says the LORD, "to deliver you."

Baruch mistakenly thought he could leverage his position as Jeremiah's scribe to aggrandize himself. He imagined he could use God's promised protection of Jeremiah as an "insurance policy," all the while taking advantage of insecure times to find "great things," maybe wealth and power, for himself. Baruch's priorities in this time of trouble were wrongly oriented.

In His mercy, God rebukes Baruch in order to set him on the right path, one of service to Him as Jeremiah's assistant:

"And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh," says the LORD. "But I will give your life to you as a prize in all places, wherever you go." ([Jeremiah 45:5](#))

In essence, He tells him to abandon his desires for "great things" as he refocuses his life on God's work. He does not promise Baruch "great things," but only protection "in all places, wherever you go."

In this is a lesson for us, Christians approaching the end of the age. Just a few verses before His comments on seeking in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ aims at reorienting our focus as well, urging us to develop right priorities. His instruction in [Matthew 6:31-33](#) echoes His comments to Baruch hundreds of years earlier:

Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the [kingdom of God](#) and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Like Jeremiah and Baruch, we today face desperately trying times, times of ending. It will take great spiritual focus and perseverance to endure to the end, as we are urged to do. We would do well to take to heart Paul's words, recorded in [I Timothy 6:6-9](#):

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into [this world](#), and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

God's admonition, recorded in [Hebrews 13:5](#), could apply to Baruch as much as it does to us: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" When our minds are fixed on getting for ourselves, our orientation is completely wrong in relation to the Kingdom of God. Jesus teaches in [Mark 8:35-36](#): "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

Traditional Irish history indicates that God indeed preserved Baruch through, not just the harrowing years of Judah's fall to Babylon, but also through a long journey with Jeremiah to the British Isles, accompanying the king's daughters to safety with another branch of the House of Judah, healing the

breach ([Genesis 38:27-30](#)). Just as He promised, God did not forsake him, bringing him safely to a kind of Promised Land. If our priorities are right, He will do the same for us.

- Charles Whitaker

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Don't Lose Your Focus!](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Because most prophetic interpretations have not been correct, we must exercise caution when attempting to interpret prophecy. As we have erred regarding Israel's identity, Protestants have erred by assuming that the tiny nation of Israel is end-time Israel. The greater church of God does not have all the pieces about the identity of Israel, the nature of the Laodicean and Philadelphian churches, whether the Beast will rise from a feeble and decrepit Europe, who the King of the South is, etc. The apostle Paul urged that we get our focus more balanced, emphasizing love over prophetic correctness, not remaining indifferent to what Christ deemed important, and learning how to use our trials to persevere and grow. Christ warned His disciples as He ascended not to obsess over prophecy. Instead, we need to persevere, not becoming distracted, and diligently submit to the Word of God.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Are You Living the Abundant Life?](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Non-Christians tend to see Christianity as an utterly boring, rigid way of life. However, Jesus Christ Himself says He came to give His disciples abundant life (John 10:10). Richard Ritenbaugh reveals the big 'secret' in living the abundant life.

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G.
Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email
Subscriptions page](#).
