

Jeremiah: A People In Crisis

How can we remain faithful to God even when many of the people around us are not? What are ways we can share the gospel, even when we face opposition? In this sermon series we will explore the life and ministry of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah's ministry was characterized by opposition, suffering, and a message that his people did not want to hear.

What can we learn from his faithful journey and the message that God gave this rebellious people? Jeremiah's life displays the necessity of both deep faith and engagement with a world that needs it. How strange and wonderful that this most sensitive of men has been sent on a mission that calls for the utmost strength and courage in the face of what becomes intense adversity. Today let begin by turning to **Jeremiah 1:1-19**

A Little Background on Jeremiah. Jeremiah, whose name means "God hurls", is called the weeping prophet. Why? It was because of his disposition and his dilemma. He was a young man heartbroken over the condition of his land. was concerned. The day saw a political whirlpool and a moral cesspool. It was a time Jeremiah was born in a day where politics were corrupt, the pulpit was compromised and the prophet when the nation was in rebellion towards God. The prophet delivered severe rebukes and a call to repentance. The whole scene has a striking resemblance to our day in time! Does it not?

Jeremiah was born into a priestly family from Anathoth, about 3 miles northeast of Jerusalem. He was called by God as a *na'ar* (**1:6**), a youth about 16 to 18 years old. He was the age to marry, but God forbade it. (**16:1-4**). Despite the Godly reforms instituted by Josiah, Jeremiah's preaching was a denunciation of Judah's paganism. Jeremiah admired Josiah (**22:15-16**) but remained horrified at the corruption of Judah's society. For over 20 years the maturing prophet confronted these people with charges of sin and calls for repentance (**25:3**). With the death of Josiah, the evils Jeremiah witnessed were multiplied. The prophet was about 35 when he began to openly attack Josiah's successor, Jehoiakim (**22:13-19**). Jeremiah was brought to trial and, although acquitted of capital charges, was nearly killed (**26:10-23**).

Jeremiah kept on warning Judah against resisting Babylon and charged God's people with abandoning their covenant with the Lord (**11:9-17**). There was growing resentment by the people and the leaders of Judah. Citizens of his hometown conspired to take his life (**11:18-23**); even members of his own family were involved (**12:6**). Everywhere Jeremiah went he heard curses and jeers (**15:10-11; 17:15; 20:7**). Jeremiah called passionately upon God to judge his enemies (**11:20; 12:3; 15:15; 17:18; 18:18-23; 20:12**). At least 3 times he tried to give up his ministry... *unsuccessfully* of course. (**9:2; 15:10-11; 20:9**) He experienced deep despair (**20:14-16**). But he stayed on task. This sensitive prophet kept on preaching his message of impending doom. He served as a prophet for 40 years. Jeremiah did live to see Jerusalem destroyed. Just who is this man... Jeremiah was a man who was:

I. TRAINED FOR THE TIMES (v.1-8)

¹ **The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, ...His Identification...** Note, he grew up in a priestly family. Jeremiah had a good beginning. He was well-trained, heavily influenced and had a sensitive spirit. God, himself, created, conditioned and positioned Jeremiah. Note his hometown was a rural area. He was close enough to know what was going on around him. He was far away enough to be objective to the situation. He was a man ready for the time.

² **to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. ³ It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. ...His Revelation & Duration...** “The Word” This and similar phrases are found many times in the O.T. They identify a direct revelation of God to or through a person called to be His messenger to that generation. For Jeremiah ... Nothing spectacular. He was walking a with the Lord. His ministry spanned 40 years and the reign of five kings.

⁴ **Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” ...His Formation...** Before his birth there was a purpose. God was at work. **Formed** – The word means “fashioned”. God is involved in forming and shaping the preborn. **Knew** – God knew him before forming him. This describes interest and intimacy. **Set Apart** – The idea is “consecrated”; a special category. **Appointed** – He was called to be a prophetic voice. God not only knows us, He made us the way we are! God has equipped us for whatever mission He had in mind.

⁶ **Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” ⁷ But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.” ...His Hesitation...** Isaiah said “I will”. Moses said “I won’t”. Jeremiah said “I can’t”. He saw himself inadequate for the mission. Because of his age and speech. Look at the Lord’s rebuke. Jeremiah did not volunteer for the job, he was drafted. He was not overpowered but persuaded.

II. TOUCHED FOR THE TASK (v.9-10)

⁹ **Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. ...The Touch** – Isaiah’s touch was for cleansing. Jeremiah’s touch was to empower. He would need a special measure of God’s power for his task. He didn’t want to begin and there would be times when he wanted to quit.

¹⁰ See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” ...The Tasks – Jeremiah came into a confused world. His tasks were to tear down and build up. It would be both a negative and positive ministry. Jeremiah had a disturbing message. The kingdom is not built on the negative.

III. TRIUMPHANT IN TURMOIL (v. 11-19)

¹¹ And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see an almond branch.” ¹² Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.” ...The Tree... An almond tree. Note the budding. This would be the first sign of the coming of spring. In the Hebrew language the word means “that which is awake.” God is saying “I watch over my word and my world. I’m awake to what is going on. I’m not going anywhere. I am about to act.” Some thought God didn’t care, or He was distant. He is now about to act in deliverance, doom and destiny.

¹³ The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.” ¹⁴ Then the LORD said to me, “Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁵ For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the LORD, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. ¹⁶ And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands. ...The Terror... The “pot” is boiling or seething. “North” is a picture of Babylonian judgment. It is a symbol of dark powers. Punishment is the inevitable consequences of sin. God does not take joy in judging.

¹⁷ But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. ¹⁸ And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. ¹⁹ They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you.” ...The Triumph... Jeremiah was promised that the enemies would not prevail over him. His mission was to warn them before it was too late. They would fight him bitterly, but he did not waver. He was a man of steel. He would need to be because it would be a war-zone. They would try to destroy him. So much for prosperity, popularity and fame... Going forward will be wearisome for him.

Like Jeremiah... if we are going to be a dynamic voice to a dying world, we too must be **Trained for the times... Touched for the tasks...and then we can be Triumphant in Turmoil**. God has put us here for a specific purpose. He has called us to be his prophetic voice. Our work is not unlike that of Jeremiah. To say no to His command is to miss our destiny! **Let’s Pray.**