

Jeremiah 1:4-10 – The Reluctant Prophet

Calvin, Gray, TSK, Henry, HebrewLexicon, Trapp, Poole, Delitzsch, Geneva, Clarke, JFB, Barnes, INT, Gill?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: It is hard to stand up and speak against your own friends and neighbors when they are wrong, isn't it? It is especially hard because you know they wouldn't like it and you might lose some friends!

It is even harder to speak up against people in the church – especially the leaders.

But that was exactly what Jeremiah was called to do.

In this sermon you will hear **God's call and preparation of Jeremiah** to rebuke his fellow Jews for their ungodliness, especially in light of the imminent Babylonian threat. (He had to encourage them to repent also!)

Our headings are:

Jeremiah Commissioned

Jeremiah Complained

Jeremiah Confronted

Our goals are: **That you will be encouraged to proclaim God's truth to a church that has compromised with sin and to a world in mortal danger of hell.**

Jeremiah Commissioned

4 Then the **word of the LORD** came to me, saying: 5 "Before **I formed you** in the womb I **knew you**; Before you were born **I sanctified you**; **I ordained you** a prophet to the nations."

1. Jeremiah means "One who is appointed."

Jeremiah prophesied in the 6th century BC before Babylon came and carried away the southern tribes (Judah and half the tribe of Benjamin) into slavery.

(The northern 10 ½ tribes had already been taken captive by the Assyrians in 722BC.)

Jeremiah prophesied for 40-50 years, including in Egypt.

Jeremiah's language was remarkably strong, and for good reason! Judah, the **place from where the Messiah was promised**, was put in great danger by the complacent life of the Jews.

Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet (who wrote Lamentations) because he greatly mourned for what had happened to Israel and what was about to happen to Judah.

Jeremiah was persecuted severely by his fellow Jews. He was likely stoned to death in Egypt for prophesying against them.

2. Jeremiah was specifically called to announce God's warning to the Judah, lest a similar fate come on them as on Israel.

He was also called to **prophesy to the nations.** "To the nations" is better translated "**against the nations.**"

3. God encouraged Jeremiah to take up his call to prophesy by reminding him of 4 things:

a. God had chosen him for this work before he was born. This was not uncommon.

Isaiah 49:1 "Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.

Galatians 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,

b. God had loved him before he was born. That's what "knew" meant.

c. God had sanctified him before he was born. This meant God had separated him for special service. This was not referring to the regular cleaning out that all Christians face throughout their lives.

d. God had ordained him to be a prophet to the nations. (Jeremiah 27:2-3, for instance.) He spoke to nations (including the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Moabites) and continues to speak to nations today from beyond the grave.

4. Lessons:

a. God guided you to where you are today and has given you your tasks to do! Nothing happens by accident. You are where you are because of the plan of God.

b. You must be brave to do your appointed tasks. Be bold as a mother. Raise you children well. Be bold as a friend. Confront your friends when they are not living well. Be bold as a child and respectfully disagree with your parents when they are breaking God's law. Be bold as elders when you have to exercise discipline.

c. Why must you be bold? Negatively, people will try to stop you from speaking the truth and confronting them in their sins. Often they don't like what you have to say. So you must be bold! Positively, this is about the worship and glory of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, 16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

d. Don't let youth, or size, age, education, or position – stop you from doing what God says. The arch-heretic Pelagius was born in England, but the great Reformer Augustine was from Africa! (Of course, you have to know *if* you have freedom to confront someone...so don't interrupt the Prime Minister when he is in a meeting.) You have no right to speak there.

If God is calling you to a task (with an internal and external call), pursue it. Don't be afraid. **Speak of the coming judgment.**

Jeremiah Complained

6 Then said I: "**Ah**, Lord GOD! Behold, **I cannot speak**, for I **am a youth**."

1. Jeremiah complained that he was not able to proclaim God's judgment on Judah because he was too young.

He acted as Moses did when God sent him to proclaim God's truth to Pharaoh in Exodus 4. (Who am I, Lord?)

He acted as Isaiah who thought he was unworthy to be used by God. Jeremiah was likely under 25 years of age! A man was not given a position as a priest, for instance, until age 30.

But you have to consider this culturally. In North America we give priority to the educated. In many cultures, they give priority to the aged. So a young man as Jeremiah would have been brushed aside as insignificant.

Yet, Jeremiah had no ground to reject God. Because God was speaking, he should have immediately obeyed.

2. Jeremiah, however, even in his complaint, was not disrespectful to God.

You will notice the "ah" at the beginning. You can translate that as "please." "Please God, look, I cannot speak."

3. Lessons:

a. You do not know all God intends for you to do in your life, but you must accept and do it when he calls you to do something. Yes, it is normal to plan according to your abilities and gifts, but when God calls, don't make excuses.

b. It is normal to feel inadequate to the task to which God has called to you...to be a mother or a father...or an elder or deacon, or preacher, and to complain.

And by yourself, **you are inadequate!** (How can you live up to the Savior's standards?) But God never calls you to do a spiritual job with your own strength.

Jeremiah Confronted

7 But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.

1. God rebuked Jeremiah for saying his youth rendered him unable to do this important work and told him to go and do it.

God was literally saying: **Stop making excuses, Jeremiah.**

8 **Do not be afraid** of their faces, For **I am with you to deliver** you," says the LORD.

2. God told Jeremiah not to be afraid of the faces of his enemies for he would deliver Jeremiah from them.

The enemies might have been scary, but God commanded him not to be afraid.
(To be forewarned is to be half-armed!)

But on what basis could Jeremiah remain fearless? Jeremiah was not to fear because he **trusted in his coming Savior!** He knew God's promises to Abraham to conquer the nations! So he had no reason to fear!

Further, God wasn't just next to Jeremiah to occupy space or to just be a friend.

God was there to deliver him from his enemies! **That was another reason not to fear!** Isn't that exactly what Jesus said to his disciples, "I have all power, and look, I will be with you as you go to conquer the world through preaching!"

Jeremiah's enemies included the Jews who believed God would never destroy his people, regardless of how they lived. So he had to be strong like Ezekiel!

Ezekiel 3:9 "**Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them,** nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house."

9 Then the LORD put forth His hand and **touched my mouth**, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have **put My words in your mouth**.

4. God then strengthened Jeremiah to confront the Jews by touching his tongue (a beautiful picture), putting his words in Jeremiah's mouth and consecrating the words he spoke.

(And you will see the shocking words Jeremiah spoke of King Jehoiakim – king of Judah.)

God also told Jeremiah he had to speak *God's Words*...not Jeremiah's!

10 See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant."

5. God then confirmed Jeremiah's commission to speak God's truth to the nations. This was not a commission for Jeremiah to be a ruler or a commission to demand yearly tribute and get rich!

Jeremiah was appointed to announce God's condemnation of wicked nations.

Jeremiah 5:14 Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: "Because you speak this word, Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them.

Jeremiah 23:29 "Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"

Jeremiah was also appointed to raise up repentant nations to life through his call to repentance.

So there were announcements of judgment, but there were also encouragements to repentance.

6. Lessons:

a. God is not limited by man's limitations. He used David to kill a lion, a bear, and a giant. He used Samson to push down a building. He used fishermen to raise the dead. He can use you to do any task he has appointed for you.

b. So when God calls you to a task, go! Be ready to stand up against the world for God!

Revelation 10:11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

c. When God gives you a task, he will give you the gifts to fulfill that task.

d. Don't be afraid of anyone when you are doing what is right in your Savior's eyes! Raise your children well- as God says. Shepherd the flock as God says! Worship when God calls you! When God wants you to be safe, there is nothing anyone can do to stop you!

Acts 18:10 "for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

Matthew 10:19 "But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;

But don't assume God will always save your life. When he is ready for you to go home, he will allow you to die. **So being brave does not mean you will always be physically protected.**

Ask Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley who were burned at the stake for holding on to true biblical doctrines in England.

e. The big task is to root out idolatry in the church and in the nations through the Words on your lips and establish the kingdom of Christ. You have to tear down the bad in order to build the good! **Warn** the church of her complacency. **Encourage** her when she does well. Do the same to the state! **Be bold.**

You have the right and the power to do it!

Matthew 18:18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

But make sure you are speaking God's words, not yours, however!

Conclusion:

God **commissioned Jeremiah** to be his witness (of rebuke and encouragement) to Judah and some of the surrounding nations. But Jeremiah **balked at the commission, complaining he was inadequate for the task.** God then **confronted and encouraged Jeremiah to take up the** task he had given to him.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Whatever task God has chosen for you, maybe multiple tasks, fulfill them. That task may be to confront others in the church who are living in sin, to confront a family member living wickedly, or to confront the leaders of our nation who are treating God and his

people with contempt! That task may be to be a father, or a mother, or a friend, or a preacher, or a deacon, or an elder. That task may be to be a politician or a policeman to protect God's people or a lawyer to defend God's people. That task may be a writer for God's people! Do it.

2. The reason you must fulfill your task is because you are God's children – redeemed by Christ. So this work is for the glory of your Savior. You are under obligation! Of course, **you should want to do that task!** And of course, there are **rewards for doing it.** Of course, the **kingdom needs you** to do that work and do it well.

3. You must also proclaim God's truth to the nations so they too might be saved from the fires of hell.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, you are subject to God's judgment because you aren't in a right relationship with God. But you can become right with God if you plead Christ's life and death as yours! There is no reason you shouldn't do that today!