

Jeremiah 1

Jeremiah is called *the weeping prophet*; who wrote Jeremiah and Lamentations. Jeremiah was the prophet who tried unsuccessfully to get Judah to repent before the Babylonian invasion and national deportation. He served under good King Josiah, and then under evil kings Jehoiachaz, King Jehoiakim, King Jehoiachin and finally King Zedekiah. Jeremiah served from 626 BC to 587 BC. Jeremiah came from a family of priests.

On one hand, it seems like Jeremiah's efforts were in vain, as he could not stop his countrymen from veering straight into harm's way. But Jesus honored Jeremiah as being a devoted servant. He completed his assignment faithfully. Jeremiah had doubts about himself and about his impact on this hard headed people.

Like Jeremiah, we have been told to stand as Kingdom witnesses in an imploding post-Christian society. Jeremiah had a thankless job, and he was thoroughly rejected. He had almost no disciples. Perhaps we can recalibrate our concept of victory and success look like, as we read about this frustrated and disrespected man who was found to be faithful according to Jesus.

Read Jeremiah 1:1-10: Jeremiah could clearly see that his people were letting themselves slip away into sin. Without a national repentance they were doomed. Prophecy is often called a *burden*, because it is so depressing to think about and visualize. It is the same way that we feel as we hear about faithless national policies that our leaders adopt.

Jeremiah was commissioned to speak to multiple nations about repenting. Prophets are God's spokesmen. Jeremiah was not the only biblical preacher who felt that the task was too great for him. Moses felt that he was inadequate for his assignment. Timothy felt that he was too young and inexperienced. Jeremiah also felt that there was no point in trying to change the mind of these hardened sinners. How do we find joy amongst hopeless assignments? For starters, we need to focus on the delivery, not just the results. We do not control the response of others. That is up to the Holy Spirit. Many times our prayers for change will start with us.

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

You could say that almost all of the prophets had a very minimal impact on changing their country over the long term.

I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, "Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!" But they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense to other gods. (Jeremiah 44:4-5)

The most-satisfying life we can have is to fulfill our God-given mission. Trying to blend that tall order with our own ideas will go wrong for us. Perhaps the most unpleasant part of our

God-given task is that we have already concluded its outcome. Our anxiety can come from us expecting that it is not going to work.

Read Jeremiah 1:11-16: Jeremiah had a couple of visions. God can speak through familiar things, to teach us about unseen spiritual things. The first thing he saw was an almond branch. The Hebrew word for almond is the same word used to ‘watch’ out for something. It also means to expedite something along. God says that now he is ready. Almonds are among the first trees to wake up after winter. Most trees form buds and bloom after winter, and as the days get longer. Almond trees bloom at the tail end of winter, before spring. They bloom in February and March. In a sense, they are signs that things are about to change. In other words, the almond branch blooming is like God’s Fed-Ex envelope with an urgent message of something coming our way.



The dual meaning for almond is also the same as when a predator watches its prey from cover.

The nation had been sinning since Joshua died. God was telling them that they could no longer stay on his property.

The second vision was a pot of boiling water; as if to begin making a soup. The Babylonians and other nations had conspired to sack Judah and Jerusalem. God told the people, through the prophets to repent, but they would not. Then God told them to just go with the Babylonians and move to Babylon. They would be able to start a new life. Resisting the invasion would result in self-destruction. Most of the people starved during the siege and were cut down with the sword. In reality, they starved themselves and stepped in front of a buzz saw because they did not want to be agreeable with God. When we are deep in sin, we hide from God...and we do not want to hear about solutions. There is no logic that can get through to a porn or drug addict. Only hard circumstances can give us a cause to pause.

In essence, these two visions are telling the people that ‘soup is on’ and you are it. Last chance to save yourself!

Read Jeremiah 1:17-19: God telling Jeremiah that he would be hated and resisted by his people, the kings, the priests and the local leadership. Faith can be the act of standing alone. In reality, it looked like Jeremiah was like the proverbial one-legged man who was in a contest that he cannot win. Part of faith is stepping into harm’s way, knowing that it is really God who we need to fear...not the crowd or pop culture. They are all going down hard.

*You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.
(Deuteronomy 6:13)*