

Jeremiah 1:4-19

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[0 : 00] Please have a seat. Would you like to turn in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 1, and we're reading at verse 4.

Jeremiah chapter 1, and reading at verse 4. This is the Word of the Lord.

The call of Jeremiah. The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled. The word of the Lord came to me again. What do you see? I see a pot that is boiling, I answered.

It is tilting towards us from the north. The Lord said to me, From the north, disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms, declares the Lord.

[2 : 03] Their kings will come and set up the thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem. They will come against all our surrounding walls and against all the towns of Judah.

I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods, and in worshipping what their hands have made.

Get yourself ready. Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar, a bronze wall to stand against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land.

They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you, declares the Lord.

Amen. Let's pray together. Once again, Lord, we thank you for your word, and we pray that tonight you'll give a power of concentration to listen to your word, to acknowledge it, to believe it, and to put it into practice by faith.

[3 : 24] We pray that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher tonight, educating us in spiritual truths for the glory of your precious name.

We pray. Amen. The title of the message tonight is The Call and Commission of Jeremiah, as it is contained in Jeremiah chapter 1, verses 4 to 19.

And first of all, let's look at the context of the chapter. Jeremiah's father, Hilkiyah, was a priest. You see that in verse 1, and young Jeremiah, probably about 20 years old at this time, was seen to be someone who would also become a priest as well.

In the time of Jeremiah, there were difficulties, great difficulties. The people of Israel had forsaken God big time, and Jeremiah was born at a time which was extremely difficult, in the sense that King Manasseh, a very evil man, was lording it over the Israelites.

The people of Israel had forsaken their God. And if you want some flavor as to what this looked like, if you look at chapter 2, verse 5, it says, they followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves.

[4 : 57] Look at verse 6 of chapter 2. They did not ask, where is the Lord who brought us out of Egypt? In other words, there was a neglect of thankfulness and praise to God for what He'd already done in the past.

They were desensitized to that, immune from that. They did not acknowledge the wonders of God taking them out of Egypt.

And brothers and sisters, it is a very bad place to be in. It's a very dangerous place to be in when we forget what God has done for us.

I'm not referring to living in the past, but acknowledging what God has done, the miracle of transformation in our lives, the miracle of being born again.

This should be our daily talk, when we consciously remember what God has done for us. Worse than that, look at verse 8 of chapter 2.

[6 : 00] Even the priests forgot to ask the question, where is the Lord? No example from the priests. No acknowledgement of God amongst the people.

And verse 13, My people have committed two sins. They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns.

And the cistern in Israel was like a reservoir of fresh water, where people would go to that reservoir on a hot, dry day and be refreshed.

Their reservoir intact with water. Your so-called cisterns are broken. They're worthless. There's no water. There's no refreshment.

There's no turning to God in Israel at this time. But God had not appointed Jeremiah to become a priest, rather a prophet.

[7 : 03] If I had the choice, I would have much preferred being a priest, not a prophet. A priest's duties were predictable. Everything was written down in the law.

They had to follow the instructions, offer sacrifices, examine lepers, care for the sanctuary, teach the law. This, this, this, and this.

The prophet had to be switched on all the time. He did not know at what day the Lord would call him to speak to those people, to this group.

The priests protected and preserved the past. The maintenance work of the sanctuary. But the prophet had to speak to nations, calling them back to God, calling them back to spiritual ways again.

And the ministry of the prophet was to the heart of the people. In other words, the book of Jeremiah is a book written to the hearts of people.

[8 : 07] The word heart is mentioned 66 times in the book of Jeremiah. And those prophets, like Jeremiah, had to speak to people who were classically not interested, did not want to hear the truth, didn't want to hear that call, return, come back, scrap the false gods and the idolatry, come back to me.

A very unpopular message in those days. So, Jeremiah would have had a much easier time being a priest rather than being called to be a prophet.

So, that is the context of the situation. A prophet, not a priest. So, firstly, let's look at God's call to Jeremiah.

As we have said, it's a call to be a prophet, to speak for God to the people to bring them back to God. And of course, God has a call on everybody's life tonight.

Every Christian in this church is called by God to serve God with a particular task. And the question is this, how do we know the call of God?

[9 : 30] Well, Jesus said in John chapter 15, my sheep hear my voice. So, in terms of knowing what God's call is on our lives, we have to listen and be close to God.

Otherwise, we don't hear it. We don't absorb it. So, if we are called to be a prayer warrior, we need to listen to God. Our Sunday school teacher, listen to God to know what the call is, how we are going to exercise that call, minister into that call.

But how can we be sure it is the call of God? Well, because people ask these questions. There is a peace in our hearts when we know it.

There's a settled disposition. We are, we have peace in our hearts and a thrill in our hearts as well. I'm not called to be an accountant.

That wouldn't sit with me at all. I'd have no energy to do that. I wouldn't have a desire to that. But to preach the word of God? Yes. There is a peace that comes and knowing as we listen to God and hear His voice.

[10 : 44] But how can we be sure it is God who's calling? How can we be sure it's not just ourselves or worse, Satan speaking to us? Well, if it's the call of God, it has to measure to the word of God.

It has to be in line with God's word and His purposes. You see, I've heard people say to me, well, you know, I'm called, Jim, to go to the countryside on a Sunday and worship God there on my own. I don't need to go to church. Now, that can never be the call of God. Why? Because that rubs against Scripture. Hebrews 10, verse 25, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as some are in the habit of doing.

So, that cannot be God calling against His word. So, how do I know this call? Well, it's peace. It's lining up with Scripture and it's a very wise thing for young people, especially, to seek out godly, mature Christians in your fellowship and say, what do you think?

Does that sound right? Do you feel in your heart that this is what I should be doing? Good to acknowledge, experience Christians and humble ourselves and receive guidance.

[12:10] So, what was this call that God gave to Jeremiah? what was it like? What was the specific challenging task? Well, let's look at verse 10 and find out.

See, today, I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot, tear down, destroy, and overthrow to build and to plant.

Four negatives, two positives. Can that be the call of God? Oh, yes it is. It is the call of God.

Jeremiah had to preach a tough message to stubborn people.

It's like if you've got an allotment, you've just got it and it's full of weeds, you take severe action on the weeds, you get rid of the weeds and the stones and the muck, clear the allotment, dig it, and plant seeds after severe actions on the thistles and weeds.

And God's call to Jeremiah is specific and challenging. A message that people didn't want to hear but needed to hear.

[13:34] taking severe action. And our message today actually is the same. Before we can build something beautiful for God, we have to get rid of the rubbish in our lives.

And there are two significant words that need to be mentioned today in churches. One is repentance and one is renunciation. I'll give you an example.

Supposing someone who's in Freemasonry becomes a Christian. And when they become a Christian, they renounce those ways in the name of Jesus.

Meaning, I don't only repent and turn around. I seek to say, I will not go back to that lifestyle. I will reject Freemasonry for all my life.

That's a kind of repentance and renunciation. And Jeremiah's message was tough and strong, but never clinical, no, never analytical, never cold, but filled with tears.

[14:45] That's why we call him the weeping prophet. It was bathed in tears. He cried out for those people. It wasn't a case of being harsh with people for harshness sake.

They needed to know that before they could build and plant their lives successfully, they had to repent. This is the message that must be preached today in pulpits throughout our land to turn the country back to God.

We've had so much soft stuff and liberal stuff that changes nothing, clears nothing, but we must be faithful to this message.

Tear down the idols in Israel. Tear down the false gods. Get rid of them and then build something so beautiful for God.

Jeremiah's response and God's encouragement. Well, Jeremiah said, Lord, you expect me to say these words?

[15:55] Look at verse 6. Alas, sovereign Lord, I said, I do not know how to speak. I am too young. Now, at face value you might say, what a bad response.

I mean, come on, Jeremiah. You're being asked by the Lord to do this and you're complaining that you're too young. I actually think it's a very good response. A very good response.

Better than saying, yes, sir, I'll do that. No problem at all. Easy. Jeremiah hesitated at three things. The work before him, the wickedness around him, and the weakness within him.

And he said, I can't do this. This is huge for me. I'm not up to it. I don't have strength for this task. And that is a brilliant way to approach the call of God.

I cannot do this without you, O Lord. Paul picked this up in 2 Corinthians. And who is sufficient for these things?

[16:59] Who is sufficient to be a good, faithful Christian, to be a good, faithful Sunday school teacher, to be a good evangelist, preacher, pastor, minister?

Who is strong enough? And Paul says, our sufficiency is of God. 2 Corinthians 3 verse 5. When God calls, He equips.

And the only way to successfully carry out our ministry, our calling, is to say, Lord, unless you turn up, I cannot preach. I cannot share.

I cannot properly evangelize to my next door neighbor without you. I need you, Lord. Rather than sometimes what's going on in the world today, just showing off and being boastful and, oh yeah, no

problem.

I don't need to pray about it. I don't need to seek God for that. It just comes because I'm so gifted and experienced. Jesus said, apart from me, you can do nothing.

[18:05] Notice, God did not change His mind. God didn't say, oh yeah, of course, yeah, 20 years old. Sorry, I made a mistake. I'll change my mind. Somebody else will do it then. He said, verse 7, do not say, I am too young.

You must go and say what I have commanded you. In other words, He's saying, Jeremiah, excuse me, you're my man. You're my young man.

I have a right to choose you. You're my man. Nobody else. And God is saying that to us tonight.

You're my man. You're my woman. You can do this with my strength.

You are not Mr. Nobody. Miss Nobody, Mrs. Nobody. In my strength, you can do this. Look at God's great encouragement.

And if anybody needed encouragement with this kind of prophetic word, it was Jeremiah. There are one or two things.

[19:10] Number one, God's foreknowledge. Look at verse 5. Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you before you were born, I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet to the nation.

The foreknowledge of God is an amazing thing. And it's connected to two things. It's connected to the task involved. God knew before he was ever born, before Jeremiah was ever born, that he would be able to do this task.

God knows everything. Before he existed in the womb of his mother, God knew that. But when we're talking about the foreknowledge of God, the focus is not so much on the task, it's upon the man himself.

The foreknowledge of God is him loving and setting his affection on the man himself. This man, I love you, do the task. This is the man of God.

I love you with an everlasting love, and my love and strength will be yours. It's mainly attached to the person rather than the task, although the task is involved. The foreknowledge of God is a beautiful thing to consider.

[20:24] God's election and selection of us before we were ever born. How encouraging was that for Jeremiah? And secondly, in verse 8 and in verse 17, God tells him, do not be afraid.

Verse 17, do not be terrified by them. And God was saying, I want to deal with something, Jeremiah, before you even begin your ministry, I want to deal with the fear of man, which the Bible says is a snare.

Don't you be afraid, Jeremiah, for I recognize you, verse 18, as an iron pillar. Get yourself ready. Let's look at it in our Bibles. Verse 17 for a start. Get yourself ready. Come on, Jeremiah, stand up and say to them whatever I command you.

Do not be terrified by them or I will terrify you before them. Now look at this. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar, a bronze wall to stand against the whole land.

[21:31] I do not feel like this, Lord. I am feeling my age 20 years or thereabouts. I feel inadequate. But, brothers and sisters, it's not how you feel.

That's the most important thing. It's who you are in Christ. That's the most important thing. You may not feel up to it or feel that you can do it, but in Christ you have strength to do it.

You are important to God. You are strong in Him. In fact, the Bible says when I am weak, then I am strong. And as we feel our weakness, we feel strong in Him.

What an encouragement the Lord was to Jeremiah. Come on, man. Stand up and speak. You are like that in my eyes. You don't see yourself like that in your own eyes, but I see you like that.

And then, verse 9, God's touch. Then the Lord reached out His hand and touched my mouth. What Jeremiah needed more than anything else was the supernatural touch of God.

[22:47] That's what he needed. One touch from the awesome God of Israel was sufficient to propel them into action.

Not a set of instructions of all we need sometimes. Not some more education on the matter, but the touch of Almighty God. Same with Isaiah in Isaiah 6.

As His mouth was touched. See this has touched my lips. Your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for. What a difference the touch of God has upon someone exercising the call of God.

And thirdly, God's great promises. It's interesting, isn't it, that we're now looking at verses that speak about what are you seeing?

Jeremiah, what do you see? First of all, verse 11, what do you see, Jeremiah? I see the branch of an almond tree. In Israel, the almond tree blossoms in January, the harbinger of spring.

[24 : 00] Spring is coming. It will come. January, soon spring. It's the forerunner of spring. And God is saying, yes, Jeremiah, my word will have effect.

I will carry my word out just as spring follows the blossom of the almond tree in January, so I will perform my word. Be sure of that.

It will come to pass. Don't you worry. Jeremiah, every word you speak is important. No word from God is wasted. And maybe, maybe some people need to hear that tonight.

Every word you say in the office about Jesus Christ. Every attempt to witness in the factory for God's glory is never wasted.

No sermon done for the glory of God is ever wasted in God's economy. Nothing. Satan may say, you failed, you didn't do a good thing there, you didn't witness it properly, you are bad, you tripped up, you failed, you exaggerated, but everything done in Jesus' name counts.

[25 : 11] Not one word is wasted. And God will perform His word in His time. Be encouraged, young man, Jeremiah.

And then, what do you see? Why is it, why is it always seeing? Well, as Spurgeon said, you need to see it before you preach it so that others also might see it.

See it spiritually. Not just with your physical eye, but see this burden for the nations, burden for your next door neighbor. This calling, see it from a spiritual perspective.

See this. Verse 13, I see a pot that is boiling. It is tilting towards the north. And of course, he's referring to the Babylonian army coming down from the north, the army against Israel.

God says, I will allow that to happen so that my people might waken up. I can even use them to carry out my purposes.

[26 : 14] God can use anybody. God can use everything to get His purposes fulfilled. And God is allowing things in Scotland just now. People say, well, why are people allowed to do that with the word of God?

Wreck it. Minimize it. No longer is the word of God the final authority. It is one authority amongst many authorities. Why are people allowed to do this? A crisis with morals.

A crisis in the church. A crisis with the word of God. Why are all these liberals saying these things? Why does God not step in? Well, perhaps it's to waken us up.

He allows these things to happen so that we might cry out to God and preach the truth. God even used the Babylonian army for His purposes.

And it's the same with the individual. If someone tonight is away from God and you're backsliding, you're slipping away, guess what? God will allow things in your life not to harm you but to call you back.

[27 : 23] Come back, come back, come back. That's why these things are happening and God allows them. not to spoil you and wreck you but that you might listen to the word of God.

Finally, some teaching points. Three things to finish with. Number one, everyone is called by God. Every single person in this church is called by God.

Do you know the call of God in your life? If it's just something quiet in the background praying for your pastor, praying for your elders and deacons because you are elderly and that's all you can physically do, that's a good calling.

Or whatever it is, God calls His people. And the thing that I want to stress here is the callings and gifts of God are irrevocable which means they cannot be changed.

God's call in our lives will never change. You may fall, I may fall, we slip up, we are not what we should be but that doesn't change the call. God's call is on us for good.

[28 : 37] You're my man, you're my woman. Listen to the voice of God. He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says.

Secondly, ability is always given. Ah, but watch this one. Ability is only noticed and appreciated when we step out in the call.

Jeremiah would only prove that strength and ability when he walked out into it, when he carried it out. It's not just a case of, oh yes, I pray about it, I will pray for the next 50 years about it.

You've got to act on it and then the strength is proved in the life. Verse 7 says, you must go. Don't sit. Jeremiah, don't sit down and brood over it.

Go in my name and when you go, I will give you the ability and strength. And thirdly and lastly, but I'm not sure.

[29 : 41] I don't know. Well, ask God. Ask God what the call is. James chapter 4 verse 3 says, you do not have because you do not ask and when you ask you do not receive because you're asking with wrong motives.

If you ask, dear God, I just want his call in my life. I want to know what I'm supposed to be doing. I don't want to be a spectator. I don't want to be fuzzy. I want to be clear-minded.

I want to know the call of God. Ask him and ask him for his glory and he will tell you and he may just say to you and get someone else to pray with you and give you guidance.

So let's be sure. Let's hear the voice. Let's carry it out for the glory and honor of God. and let's tell this nation about the pure word of God and the gospel and the truth that come from heaven.

In Jesus' name, Amen.