

Unit II: Jeremiah and the Promise of Renewal

Who, Me?

DEVOTIONAL READING: Jeremiah 1:11-19

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Jeremiah 1:1-10; 6:10-11; 8:18; 9:2; 26:1-24

PRINT PASSAGES: Jeremiah 1:6-10; 26:8-9, 12-16

KEY VERSE

The LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. (Jeremiah 1:7, KJV)

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The LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.” (Jeremiah 1:7, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Review the call of Jeremiah and his ministry in the context of the Babylonian threat.
- Love what God loves and hate what God hates.
- Name injustices and work for justice.

*Key Terms

Behold (1:9, KJV)—Hebrew: *hinneh* (hin-nay'): indeed; look; see, here, lo!

Build (1:10)—Hebrew: *banah* (baw-naw'): construct; establish; build upon; fashion.

Command (1:7)—Hebrew: *tsavah* (tsaw-vaw'): to charge; to appoint; to ordain; to order.

Deliver (1:8)—Hebrew: *natsal* (naw-tsal'): to save, snatch away; “rescue” (NIV).

Touched (1:9)—Hebrew: *naga* (naw-gah'): reached; struck; plagued; laid the hand upon.

Young (1:6)—Hebrew: *naar* (nah'-ar): describing a lad, youth; “a child” (KJV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

The prophet Jeremiah ministered during one of the most turbulent periods in Judah's history, spanning the reigns of five kings from Josiah to Zedekiah (627–586 BC). His call to prophetic ministry came in 627 BC, during the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign when the young king implemented religious reforms throughout Judah. Despite these reforms, the nation's spiritual condition remained superficial, and after Josiah died in 609 BC, the people quickly reverted to idolatry and moral decline.

The international political landscape was equally volatile. The Assyrian Empire declined, while Babylon rose to power under Nebuchadnezzar. Judah was caught between these competing empires and Egypt's influence from the south. The specific events of Jeremiah 26 occurred early in the reign of Jehoiakim (609–598 BC), when Jeremiah delivered his famous "Temple Sermon." His warning about the Temple's potential destruction was considered blasphemous by the religious establishment, who, like many in Judah, believed that the Temple's presence guaranteed God's protection regardless of their behavior. This incident marked a crucial turning point in Jeremiah's ministry, as it initiated a period of intense persecution that would continue throughout his prophetic career, eventually culminating in Jerusalem's fall to Babylon in 586 BC.

Introduction

The African American community has a rich heritage of standing up and speaking the truth, even when it costs them dearly. Think about civil rights pioneers like Fannie Lou Hamer, who risked her life to register black voters in Mississippi. Despite brutal beatings and constant threats, she famously declared, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired." Consider Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who, like Jeremiah, was called to prophetic ministry at a young age. When many urged him to tone down his message, he responded with his powerful "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," reminding us that "there comes a time when silence is betrayal."

Today, many still face moments when speaking truth feels risky—whether addressing systemic injustice in the workplace, standing up against discrimination in our neighborhoods, or even challenging comfortable traditions within our churches. Jeremiah was not the only one to experience feelings of fear or inadequacy or to wonder, "Who am I to speak up?" Yet, history teaches that God often chooses unlikely messengers to deliver His most important truths. Jeremiah's journey from being a hesitant young prophet to becoming a bold messenger of God's Word reveals timeless principles about courage, divine empowerment, and the cost of remaining faithful to God's calling in challenging times.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Prophet's Call (*Jeremiah 1:6-10*)

KJV

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

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

NIV

6 “Alas, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

7 But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.

8 “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

9 Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth.

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

The scene of God’s call to Jeremiah resonates with many people’s feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy. In verse 6 (NIV), Jeremiah responds with striking honesty: “Alas, Sovereign LORD, . . . ‘I do not know how to speak; I am too young.’” Here stood a young man, likely in his late teens or early twenties, feeling overwhelmed by God’s call to be a prophet to the nations. His response mirrors the common human tendency to focus on personal limitations rather than on God’s capabilities. People may substitute words—like “I’m not qualified,” “I’m not educated enough,” “I’m too old,” or “I’m too inexperienced”—but the heart of the excuse remains the same. God’s response in verse 7a is both gentle and firm: “Do not say, ‘I am too young’” (NIV). God didn’t argue with Jeremiah about his age or abilities. Instead, He redirected Jeremiah’s focus to the source of his authority: “You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you” (verse 7b, NIV). The emphasis shifts from Jeremiah’s inadequacy to God’s adequacy. This principle remains true today—effectiveness in God’s service depends not on natural abilities but on the willingness to go where He sends and speak what He commands.

Verse 8 brings a precious promise that would sustain Jeremiah throughout his difficult ministry: “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you” (NIV). God acknowledges the reality of fear but counters it with the greater reality of His presence and protection. This was not a promise of an easy life (Jeremiah would face intense persecution), but it was a promise of God’s faithful presence through every trial.

In verse 9, we witness a powerful symbolic act: “Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, ‘I have put my words in your mouth’” (NIV). This physical gesture represents spiritual empowerment. God doesn’t just call us; He equips us. The touch of God transforms inadequacies into capabilities for His service. When God calls, He also enables. Verse 10 (NIV) outlines the scope of Jeremiah’s ministry: “See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build

and to plant.” Notice the balance—four actions of judgment followed by two of restoration. Sometimes, God must tear down before He can rebuild. This pattern appears in nations and in individuals.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

When have you felt God calling you to do something that seemed beyond your abilities?

The Price of Faithfulness (*Jeremiah 26:8-9, 12-16*)

KJV

8 Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

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12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14 As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

15 But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

16 Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

NIV

8 But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, “You must die!

9 Why do you prophesy in the LORD’s name that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate and deserted?” And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

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12 Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard.

13 “Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.

14 “As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right.

15 “Be assured, however, that if you put me to death, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on those who live in it, for in truth the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.”

16 Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, “This man should not be sentenced to death! He has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.”

Years later, we see the cost of Jeremiah's faithfulness. Verse 8 describes the hostile reaction to his prophetic message: “But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, ‘You must die!’” (NIV). The very people who should have recognized God's voice through His prophet became Jeremiah's fiercest opponents. Speaking God's truth often comes with a high cost that sometimes includes persecution.

The specific charge against Jeremiah was that he prophesied the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. The people's angry reaction reveals their misplaced trust in the Temple building rather than in the God it represented. How often do people place trust in religious structures or traditions rather than in a living relationship with God? Jeremiah's response in verses 12-15 demonstrates remarkable courage and faithfulness. He did not retract his message or soften its edges; instead, he reaffirmed his divine commission: “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard” (verse 12, NIV). His words combined unwavering conviction with humble submission to God's will. He called the people to repentance while accepting that his faithfulness might cost him his life.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What do you think gave Jeremiah the strength to remain faithful to his message even when facing opposition?

A Closing Thought

The lesson is an invitation to examine the personal excuses that limit people from fully surrendering to God's work. Which fears hinder full obedience to God? Those whom God calls can safely trust His empowering presence. The same God who called and empowered Jeremiah still chooses and calls people who fulfill His purposes on the earth. An omnipotent God can use anyone He chooses. He has no need to call the equipped; God equips the called. Whether one's ministry field is the home, workplace, school, or community, God promises His presence and provision to those who will accept His call to serve.

Your Life

Jeremiah's journey encourages believers who feel inadequate or fearful when responding to God's call. People often focus on personal limitations rather than on His empowering presence. God doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called—assuring them, “I am with you.”

Jeremiah faced opposition, highlighting that faithfulness to God's call may bring resistance, even from loved ones. True courage is not about being fearless; it is about obeying despite fear and trusting that God will sustain you through challenges.

Your World!

Living out Jeremiah's example means embracing inadequacies as opportunities for God's power. When feeling unqualified to share your faith, remember that God uses ordinary people who make themselves available. Just as He touched Jeremiah's mouth, He can provide the right words for any situation, whether ethical issues at work or supporting a struggling friend. Although there may be pushback, you can respond with grace and a commitment to truth, combining courage with compassion. Most importantly, God eases the weight of the call to serve by offering His strength and promising to be with those whom He sends.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Jeremiah's inspiring example. Help us trust Your power over our own, and give us the courage to share Your truth with conviction and compassion. Use us to convey Your words of truth and hope to our generation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Please be prepared for next week's lesson. The lesson topic for Sunday, October 12, 2025, is "Walk the Talk." The Devotional Reading is Luke 6:40-46, the Background Scripture is Jeremiah 7:1-26, and the Print Passage is Jeremiah 7:1-11, 21-23.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, October 6	"Endure to the End"	(Mark 13:1-13)
TUESDAY, October 7	"God Will Protect His People"	(Mark 13:14-27)
WEDNESDAY, October 8	"To Obey Is Better than Sacrifice"	(1 Samuel 15:20-26)
THURSDAY, October 9	"Keep Christ's Commandments"	(John 14:12-17)
FRIDAY, October 10	"An Indestructible Temple"	(John 2:12-22)
SATURDAY, October 11	"The Sacrifice that Pleases God"	(Psalm 51:15-19)
SUNDAY, October 12	"Amend Your Ways!"	(Jeremiah 7:1-11, 21-23)

NOTES
