

## **God's Prophet to the nations (God's Spokesman)**

Jeremiah 1:1-19

Key verse 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."

As we heard God's call of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and Jonah we have been challenged to respond to God's call. Each of us has grappled. If you accepted His call, thank God! If you haven't, one question- what holds you back?

Today is God's call of Jeremiah, a priest, to be a prophet to the nations. When called by God, Jeremiah did not accept immediately. He also had his reasons. However, God did not give up on him. God helped him personally in 4 ways 1) God said, "I know you Jeremiah." 2) God promised to equip him. 3) God reassured his call with two visions. 4) God demanded immediate action. Just as God called Jeremiah, today God is searching for those willing to be His Spokesman, His voice, His hands and His feet. The question isn't whether God is calling, but whether you are listening. May God visit us here one by one and reveal his broken heart toward the perishing world. May God help us to listen, to accept and respond to his call today.

First, God knows Jeremiah (1-5)

In verse 1, we read: "The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin." This verse simply introduces Jeremiah, his family, and his residence around 627 BC. For context, 1 Kings 2:26-27 and 35 refer to events during King Solomon's reign 300 years before. "King Solomon had told Abiathar (the high priest) to go to Anathoth, saying, 'Go to Anathoth, to your estate, for you deserve death. But I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of the Lord God before David, my father and shared in all my father's afflictions.'" Abiathar, Jeremiah's ancestor, was expelled from Jerusalem and removed from his priestly role for supporting a rival prince instead of Solomon. For the next 300 years, the descendents of Abiathar lived as outcast priests, carrying the stigma of their infamous ancestor. So the young priest, Jeremiah also carried this shame, and lived in despair and uselessness. When King Josiah discovered the Scriptures during temple renovations in 628 BC that sparked a nationwide revival, all the priests were in high demand. However, even then, Jeremiah was not called by the king.

Look at verse 4. "Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying." Though kings had forgotten Jeremiah, The Lord had not forgotten Jeremiah. Thus he said, "Now the word of the Lord came to me!" In this passage alone, Jeremiah repeated this phrase three times. "Now the word of the Lord came to me" (v 4), "And the word of the Lord came to me" (v 11). "The word of the Lord came to me!" (v 13). Jeremiah was deeply moved that the Lord came to converse with him in person in

627 B.C. What did God say to Jeremiah? Let's read verse 5 together. "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."

Firstly, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." God knew Jeremiah. What a mystery it is that even before Jeremiah existed God knew him! Before his first breath, before his heart first beat, God knew him. He saw every moment of his life, every fear, every doubt, every victory. And still, He called him—uniquely, purposefully, intimately.

Secondly, "Before you were born I consecrated you." According to the Levitical law, Jeremiah was set apart as a priest by birth. But here God said that even before his birth, God set him apart for Himself with His purpose and plan. The Lord God already prepared His good work beforehand for him.

Thirdly, "I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah was born and trained to be a priest. But the Lord God, even before his birth, had appointed him to be a prophet. Who is a prophet? We think of prophets as those that foretell the future. But a prophet is a chosen and authorized spokesman of God who declares God's words to the people. A prophet also exposes his people's sins like a prosecutor and calls them back to their covenant relationship with God. God appointed Jeremiah to be a prophet to the nations, which included the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land as well. God had the whole nation in his mind when he called Jeremiah.

Some of us may say to Jeremiah, "Good for you! Awesome!" However, is God's call only for Jeremiah? What about you and me? When I graduated from college in 1995 in Korea, I had many worries. I was supposed to support my poor parents as the eldest son. But the Korean economy was so bad that I had no job. When I first heard Jeremiah 1:5, I thought that it was only for Jeremiah. But the words of "I knew you, I consecrated you and I appointed you a prophet to the nations" began resounding in my mind and heart for days. I could not ignore or forget his words, "I knew you, I consecrated you and I appointed you a prophet to the nations." God knew me, an ordinary young man from a Buddhist background, even before I was born? He consecrated me and set me apart for his good purpose? He appointed me, a country boy who had never been on a plane even to Jeju Island, to be his prophet to nations? This truth, that God knew me even before I was born and had a plan and purpose for my life deeply moved me. So I accepted. If God was calling me to be a prophet to the nations, then I believed that he would send me to America, where all nations gather. That vision led me to a one-year missionary internship. In 1996, my pastor asked me to meet a lady named Sarah from America. Sarah: a mother of many nations came to meet me, a prophet to the nations. 6 months later, I came to Chicago as a missionary. Praise God! Jeremiah 1:5 has been my life key verse. May God who knows you even before you were born, who consecrates and appoints you like Jeremiah speak to you as well.

Why does God call his people as prophets to the nations? It is because God wants to save the lost in this dying world. In Romans 10:13-15, Apostle Paul says, “‘For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” God is looking for those with beautiful feet, whom he will send to the world. In 1 Peter 2:9, Apostle Peter tells us that it is you whom God is calling, saying, “‘But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.’” God is calling his redeemed people to proclaim the good news to the world as his spokesman! The God of Jeremiah who knew Him and called him is the same God who knows you and calls you so that you can participate in God’s life-saving work.

Second, God equips his prophet (6-10)

How did Jeremiah respond to God’s call? Look at verse 6. “‘Then I said, ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.’” He had never been trained as a prophet. All he could do was to kill sheep and goats, offer sacrifices and burn incense as a priest. So, Jeremiah said to God, “‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak.’” Even worse, he thought that he was too immature to be a prophet to the nations. Thus he said to God, “‘You chose the wrong person!’”

Look at verses 7-9. “‘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. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you,’ declares the Lord. 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.’” Here we learn how God equipped Jeremiah.

Firstly, God equipped him with His words. In verses 7-9, the order of God’s words is important. God told him first to GO “to whomever He would send him to.” Then he was told to SAY “whatever God would command him.” Jeremiah was simply to GO and SAY wherever and whatever God told him to GO and SAY. God wanted Jeremiah’s simple obedience and full surrender. God dismissed all Jeremiah’s excuses of his inability and immaturity. How? God promised that he would equip him. To affirm what God said to him, he gave him a tangible lesson. Look at verse 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.’”

Has God put his words into your mouth? Open your mouth so that I may see what is in it! Yes, you do have something in your mouth! Some may say God has not put his words in your mouth. But Jeremiah 31:31-34 says, “‘Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will make

a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Those who have made the new covenant with God in Jesus’ blood are God’s people. What do you have in your heart? Yes, Jesus Christ, the very Word of God dwells in you, in your heart and in your mouth. Also, God has used pastors and Bible teachers to teach us the word of God week after week. Thank God who has used his servants to equip his people with his word. Even more, all who have accepted Christ receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. When the word of God and the Holy Spirit are united within our heart, we can speak the word of God with the power of the Holy Spirit. God’s powerful work of salvation will be at work when we speak his words. Look around you. You are surrounded by people, at home, at your work, in your neighborhood and in your schools. Open your mouth to speak the Spirit-led words of God so that the broken can receive the message of salvation! May our mouths be full of the living words of God, not excuses. May God bless each of us to go wherever God sends and say whatever God commands us in this new school year.

Secondly, God equips Jeremiah with his presence. In verse 8, God declared to him, “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you.” This verse implies the hard reality of his life of mission. In verses 18-19 God foretold him that kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land would fight against him. However, they could not prevail, for God was with him. Jeremiah would minister as God’s prophet for over 40 years, from King Josiah, king of Judah, all the way down to King Zedekiah. While delivering God’s message of repentance and judgment to his people, Jeremiah suffered greatly. However, what made him most sorrowful was his people’s stubborn refusal to repent. Jeremiah foresaw their exile to Babylon. Thus, he wept and wept, as the weeping prophet. Yet, In God’s call of Jeremiah, God promised that he would be with him. God would enable him to endure all kinds of sufferings. God would deliver him. Is anything better than God’s presence and deliverance?

God also equipped Jeremiah with a clear mission. Look at verse 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.” God’s message of repentance and judgment will bring destruction to nations and kingdoms that reject God and his servants. However, God is full of hope and promises renewal to those who repent of their sins and turn back to God.

In the same way, God doesn’t call the equipped; He equips the called. Jeremiah saw only his youth and inexperience, but God saw a prophet. What do you see when you look in the mirror—a person of limitations, or someone chosen and empowered by God? Remember the time when you felt unworthy, unequipped, too small. Now imagine God reaching out, touching your mouths, and filling you with His words, His power, His Spirit. Accept and see God, with you always. That is what He did for Jeremiah, and that is what He will do for you.

Third, God reassures his call of Jeremiah with two visions.

God's calling of Jeremiah was very personal. It came with the word of the Lord while he was in deep despair. The Lord spoke with him in secret. He touched his mouth. The Lord put his words into his mouth. The Lord promised to be with him to deliver him. However, practically, how would those listening to him know whether he was a true prophet of God and his words were indeed God's words? Jeremiah seemed to need more. Therefore, God reassured him of his calling with two visions.

In the first vision, verses 11-12 say. "And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' And I said, 'I see an almond branch.' Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.'" In Hebrew, "almond" sounds like "watch over". When Jeremiah said, "I see an almond branch" God said, "I am watching over my word to perform it." In Jeremiah's days, many false prophets said, "Peace! Peace! God loves you. Everything will be ok. Jeremiah is lying. Do not listen to him." But God was telling Jeremiah, "I am watching over my word to perform it." Jeremiah needed only to be faithful to preach God's words. And God would surely fulfill every one of his words. God would accomplish his will and purpose through his words. What was God's message through Jeremiah?

Let's look at the second vision. Verses 13-16. "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.' Then the Lord said to me, 'Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. 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. 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.'" God reassured Jeremiah that His message of judgment upon Judah through Jeremiah would be fulfilled. The northern kingdoms like Babylon would come down and devastate the kingdom of Judah because of her sins.

In a world full of noise, false promises, and uncertainty, God's word is the unshakable truth. Just as He reassured Jeremiah with visions, He reassures us today through His Word, through the evidence of His faithfulness in our lives. Though our times may seem overwhelming, and the future uncertain, God is watching over His word to fulfill it. Will you trust His promises, even when the path is difficult?

Fourth, God demands immediate action.

Do you think Jeremiah was willing to accept God's call immediately? It was not easy! So God gave him a push. Look at verse 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."

God did not say, “Jeremiah, I understand you. I will give you one week. Pray about it.” No! God told him to roll his sleeves, rise and speak. The time for hesitation was over.

The God who knew Jeremiah before he was born, who equipped him, reassured him, and demanded his action, is the same God who knows you, equips you, reassures you, and calls you to act. What will your answer be? Will you rise, as Jeremiah did, and become God’s voice to a world in need? Don’t leave this place the same. Let the word of God stir your heart, move your feet, and open your mouth. The world is waiting to hear the message. God is calling. Will you answer- yes Lord, I will go to wherever you send me, I will speak your life-saving word as your spokesman today?