

## JEREMIAH: A WITNESS WHO STOOD ALONE

*Objective: To serve God faithfully in the face of discouragement*

### **Memorize: Jeremiah 23:29**

**29** “Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”

If you think it is difficult to stand for Christ in your home, on your campus, or in your community, draw some encouragement from Jeremiah.

He was a prophet who endured. He acted as God’s faithful messenger in spite of many attempts on his life. His enemies challenged his prophetic honesty. He lived in constant friction with religious and political authorities. And little wonder. He recommended national surrender to the Babylonian Empire and called Nebuchadnezzar,

Judah's most hated enemy, the "servant of the Lord" (Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6).

**25:9** "I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the LORD, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin."

**27:6** Now I will give all your countries into the hands of my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him.

Furthermore, he incited his colleagues to desert to the enemy and was accused and convicted of treason.

Sometimes he complained to God about the misery of his office. But he was so sorrowful for the fallen condition of Israel that despite all of his hardships, he persisted in speaking the word of the Lord faithfully and earned the title of "weeping prophet."

Jeremiah is an example to us of sticking to a task despite all odds—especially in a time when many Christians lack long-term commitment to the things of God. Sometimes, like Jeremiah, we must be willing to be a witness who stands alone in the midst of incredible opposition to proclaim the word of God and faithfully obey His commands.

## Bible Study

### Jeremiah's Call

1. When facing Scripture verses that command you to speak for Christ, have you ever felt, “Why, I could never do that, I have no training for it”?

What did Jeremiah say (1:6)?

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

2. To be effective in speaking, one must have something to say. Where do you get the right message (1:7–17)?

<sup>7</sup> 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.

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

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

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

<sup>11</sup> **The word of the LORD came to me**: “What do you see, Jeremiah?” “I see the branch of an almond tree,” I replied.

<sup>12</sup> **The LORD said to me**, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.”

<sup>13</sup> **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 toward us from the north.”

<sup>14</sup> **The LORD said to me**, “From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land.

<sup>15</sup> I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms,” declares the LORD. “Their

kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem; they will come against all her surrounding walls and against all the towns of Judah.”

<sup>16</sup> I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made.

<sup>17</sup> **“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.”

In what way does God touch our mouths today (Ephesians 5:18)?

<sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit.**

3. Opposition of the intensity that faced Jeremiah is unknown in America, although it is common in some parts of the world. How can these verses help us overcome situations we face (1:8,18-19)?

<sup>8</sup> Do not be afraid of them, **for I am with you and will rescue you,**” declares the LORD.

<sup>18</sup> Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land.

<sup>19</sup> They will fight against you but will not overcome you, **for I am with you and will rescue you,**” declares the LORD.

## Jeremiah’s Arrest and Prayer

Read Jeremiah 19:14-15.

<sup>14</sup> Jeremiah then returned from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy, and stood in the court of the LORD’s temple and said to all the people,

<sup>15</sup> “This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Listen! I am going to bring on this city and all the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words.’”

In verse 14, we see that not only what Jeremiah said but where he spoke (and to whom) were under the Lord’s direct guidance. This was also observed in Elijah’s life as one of the secrets of

effectiveness. The secret is to be filled with God's Holy Spirit. He will lead us to those He wants us to touch. As a result, Spirit-filled Christians share their faith with others at every opportunity. The apostle Paul records in Colossians 1:28, "Everywhere we go we talk about Christ to all who will listen" (TLB).

Verse 15 was Jeremiah's unpopular message in a nutshell: condemnation upon the capital city, Jerusalem; the Babylonian armies would destroy the city. He advised the people to surrender and avoid the horrors of a siege that could not be resisted for long since God was on the enemy's side.

### 1. How did punishment affect Jeremiah's testimony (20:1–6)?

<sup>1</sup> When the priest Pashhur son of Immer, the official in charge of the temple of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, <sup>2</sup> he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin at the LORD's temple.

<sup>3</sup> The next day, when Pashhur released him from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, “The LORD’s name for you is not Pashhur, but Terror on Every Side.

<sup>4</sup> For this is what the LORD says: ‘I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; with your own eyes you will see them fall by the sword of their enemies. I will give all Judah into the hands of the king of Babylon, who will carry them away to Babylon or put them to the sword.

<sup>5</sup> I will deliver all the wealth of this city into the hands of their enemies—all its products, all its valuables and all the treasures of the kings of Judah. They will take it away as plunder and carry it off to Babylon.

<sup>6</sup> **And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into exile to Babylon. There you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies.**”

2. Verses 7–18 are an example of the abrupt interruptions interspersed throughout the book of Jeremiah. What do these prayers reveal about the apparent fearlessness of the prophet?



3. Since his message brought him so much unpopularity, what did Jeremiah consider (20:8-9)?

<sup>8</sup> Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long.

<sup>9</sup> But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

Why did he reject that idea?

4. How did his enemies think they could get the best of him (20:10)?

<sup>10</sup> I hear many whispering, "Terror on every side! Denounce him! Let's denounce him!" All my friends are waiting for me to slip, saying, "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him."

5. What thoughts restored His confidence (20:11)?

<sup>11</sup> But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly

disgraced; their dishonor will never be forgotten.

6. How can you relate Jeremiah's attitude to your experiences in witnessing for the Lord?

How can Jeremiah's example help you?

## Jeremiah's Prophecy

1. How do you think feelings of despair and frustration influenced the prophet's obedience to God?

2. When asked by the government for a word of comfort and security, what response did Jeremiah give (21:1–7)?

<sup>1</sup> The word came to Jeremiah from the LORD when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur son of Malkijah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah. They said:

<sup>2</sup> "Inquire now of the LORD for us because Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is attacking us. Perhaps the LORD will perform wonders

for us as in times past so that he will withdraw from us.”

<sup>3</sup> But Jeremiah answered them, “Tell Zedekiah,

<sup>4</sup> **‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says:** I am about to turn against you the weapons of war that are in your hands, which you are using to fight the king of Babylon and the Babylonians who are outside the wall besieging you. And I will gather them inside this city.

<sup>5</sup> **I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm in furious anger and in great wrath.**

<sup>6</sup> I will strike down those who live in this city—both man and beast—and they will die of a terrible plague.

<sup>7</sup> After that, declares the LORD, I will give Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the people in this city who survive the plague, sword and famine, into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to their enemies who want to kill them. He will put them to the sword; he will show them no mercy or pity or compassion.”

3. What decision did the prophet declare that his hearers must make (21:8–14)?

<sup>8</sup> “Furthermore, tell the people, ‘This is what the LORD says: **See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.**’

<sup>9</sup> Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live; they will escape with their lives.

<sup>10</sup> I have determined to do this city harm and not good, declares the LORD. It will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire.’

<sup>11</sup> “Moreover, say to the royal house of Judah, ‘Hear the word of the LORD.

<sup>12</sup> This is what the LORD says to you, house of David: “Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done—burn with no one to quench it.

<sup>13</sup> I am against you, Jerusalem, you who live above this valley on the rocky plateau, declares the LORD—you who say, “Who can come against us? Who can enter our refuge?”

<sup>14</sup> I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the LORD. I will kindle a fire in your forests that will consume everything around you.’”