



Too Soon to Quit by Warren W. Wiersbe Chapter 8 - Jeremiah the Traitor
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- I. **Jeremiah, the Traitor-What God begins, He will complete.**
- A. Jeremiah's name is found in the English dictionary in the word *jeremiad* which means a prolonged lamentation, a mournful complaint. It's a reference to Jeremiah's tears and grief recorded in his prophecy and the Book of Lamentations.
 - 1. Jeremiah had every reason to weep, for the leaders of the kingdom of Judah were persistently rebelling against the Lord and following their bad example.
 - 2. The nation had broken their covenant with God and were about to suffer terrible consequences at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - B. For 40 years Jeremiah preached the Word and pleaded with the people to repent and return to a sincere worship of the true and living God, but they refused. They plunged deeper into idolatry, immorality and futile attempts to get help from everyone except God.
 - C. Jeremiah told them to surrender to the Babylonians and the Lord would spare Jerusalem and the temple. This counselor made them call Jeremiah a traitor.
 - D. During his ministry he was arrested, imprisoned, beaten, put in the stocks and dropped into a filthy cistern and left to die. When his messages from the Lord were read to King Jehoiakim, the king burned the scroll (Jer.36). It was an high African official Ebed-Melek that rescued Jeremiah from the cisterns of the evil King Zedekiah. (Read Jer. 38-39)
 - E. But Jeremiah was not a traitor; he was a faithful citizen and a covenant -keeping Jew, and he alone had the remedy for the nation's plight.
 - F. The real traitors were the priests and the false prophets (Jer 6:13-15; 23:11-12)
 - G. Jeremiah was treated by his own people just as Jesus and the apostles were treated centuries later and like them he stayed true to the Lord and faithful to ministry.
 - H. Jeremiah kept going when his life was in danger. Paul's words to the believers in Phillipi were Philippians 1:6 (KJV) ⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

- I. Like Jeremiah did, we must do when we remember what the Lord starts, He finishes.

II. Sustained by God's Call

- A. Jeremiah lived with the assurance that God Called Him.
 1. His call was not spectacular like Isaiah, who saw the throne of God in heaven (Isa.6) or of Ezekiel, who saw God's throne carried by living creatures (Ezek. 1-3).
 2. However the Lord said to Jeremiah "**Jeremiah 1:5 (NASB)** ⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."
 3. It is clear to see that God was intimately involved with Jeremiah and knew him. God is also intimately involved with us.
 4. Jeremiah was chosen to be a prophet before he was even conceived. He was born to be a priest , but God called him to the much more difficult work- ministry of prophet.
 5. Jeremiah demonstrated what theologians call divine election.

III. Sustained by God's Word

- A. Jeremiah was sustained by his calling from God and also by the word that God gave him.
- B. As you read the Book of Jeremiah, you find statements like "The Lord said to me and "The word of the Lord came to me saying and "Hear the word of the Lord".
 1. The Hebrew word translated *hear, listen and obey* is used nearly two hundred times in the book.
 2. Jeremiah didn't want a surface ministry that tickled peoples ears; he wanted the Word to penetrate their hearts and transform their lives.
- C. Early in Jeremiah's ministry he served a godly King Josiah, who led the people in a national reformation and cleansed the idols out of the land.
- D. When Josiah died the people reverted to the past evil ways. Jeremiah knew the human heart was sick from sin and that the Lord examined hearts and knew every secret (Jer. 17:9-10).
- E. Like Jeremiah if we want a lasting ministry, even in the face of challenge it must start and end with the Word, from Gods heart to the hearts of needy people.
- F. When we fail to endure, like Jeremiah and proclaim the Word of God we grieve the Holy Spirit.
- G. To keep going like Jeremiah we must remember God watches over us and He watches over His word to see that it does its job, that it performs all that He intends (Jer. 1:12).

IV. Sustained by Prayer

- A. Jeremiah listened when the Lord spoke to him; and the Lord listened when Jeremiah spoke to Him in his prayers. Like the early apostles, the prophet devoted his attention to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4).

- B. Three times God told Jeremiah to stop interceding for the kingdom of Judah (7:16,11:14; 14:11) but God never told him to stop praying. Prayer helped to keep Jeremiah going when it seemed like everything was against him.
- C. Just like Jeremiah we can never give up on prayer even if what the future holds seems bleak and difficult.
- D. No sooner did the Lord call Jeremiah into His service, did he pray “Ah, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak; I am too young” (Jer.1:6) The answer came immediately for the Lord told him to go, to speak the words he was given and not be afraid.
- E. When God revealed that judgement was coming to Judah from the north, Jeremiah asked why the other prophets were preaching a message of peace and safety (4:5-10); he asked for wisdom and the Lord told Jeremiah what he needed to know.
- F. In 9:1-3 he prayed for a greater ability to weep over the people; but he also asked for a safe place in the wilderness where he could get away from it all and have some peace.
- G. In the Book of Lamentations Jeremiah ‘s prayers sound impatient with God, crushed and humiliated with the people of God (See Jer. 1:20-22; 5:1-22 and 8:21).
- H. Jeremiah demonstrates difficult situations can drive us to feel hopeless, but that is when we need to take it to the Lord in prayer. No issue is too big or small, when we see our nation in peril, plagued by injustice, immoral leadership we can go to God in prayer knowing God will execute justice and mercy.
- I. Jeremiah also shows us that our human tears are not too much for God to handle. In his book *Recovering from the Losses in Life*, H. Norman Wright “Tears are the vehicle that God has equipped us with to express the deepest feelings words cannot express, When words fail, tears are the messengers. Tears are God’s gift to all of us to release our feelings”. While some of us have never learned to cry; Jeremiah demonstrates it is ok to cry and lament.

V. Understanding the Times

- A. The prophet knew his times -the way the people lived, the leaders they followed and the lies they believed.
- B. He also recognized that the people and their leaders were spiritually blind and deaf, and willfully ignorant to God’s truth about justice, living in obedience to God’s commands and in right relationship with one another, the alien, the orphan, the widow.
- C. The false prophets were especially popular because they proclaimed an easy message of false hope.
- D. The humiliating defeat of Judah and the terrible destruction of the city and the temple could be blamed on the false prophets, compromising priests and the every-changing policies of a series of weak, evil kings and their flattering officers.
 - 1. The false prophets filled the people with false hopes and told lies;
 - 2. Jeremiah 23:16 (NASB) ¹⁶ Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision

of their own imagination, Not from the mouth of the LORD". The lying prophets told Judah no harm would come to them; but it did because of the sins of their prophets and the iniquities of their priests (Lam. 4:13).

- E. Jeremiah knew the kingdom of Judah was depending on its assets. Nations have always trusted: human wisdom, human strength and human wealth. When the Babylonian army surrounded Jerusalem, none of these so-called assets could rescue the city, the temple or the people.
- F. Churches and individual believers today make the same mistake and put their trust in anything but the Lord.
 - 1. The church at Corinth was proud of its wealth and wisdom. Paul reminded them that their assets were only liabilities if they failed to submit to the Lord and trust Him. He even quoted Jeremiah (1 Cor. 1:18-30; 2 Cor. 10:12-18).

VI. Understanding Our Weaknesses

- A. Centuries before Paul wrote Second Corinthians 12:1-10 Jeremiah knew the basic truth that when a person can recognize their weakness it can become a strength.
- B. After the revelation, God gave Paul a thorn to bear that was related to the revelation. God is in the habit of balancing our blessings with burdens. **2 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV2011)**
¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
- C. Jeremiah knew he was weak, but he also knew that God would strengthen him.
- D. Jeremiah demonstrates we can always go to God for strength and we can always show our weaknesses to God.
- E. Warren Wiersbe said "Quitters often use their weaknesses as an excuse for dropping out of the running, but winners fix their eyes on Jesus and run the race with endurance found in Heb. 12:1-3.
- F. If you have been faced with your weaknesses, feeling disconnected from God, angry or broken during this season this is an opportunity to grow in discipleship. The mark of maturity is being able to recognize our weaknesses, accept them and cooperate with the Lord in turning them into strength.

VII. Understanding that God Is With Us

- A. **Jeremiah 1:8 (NIV2011)** ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.
- B. **Jeremiah 15:20 (NIV2011)** ²⁰ I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you," declares the LORD.
- C. **Jeremiah 42:11 (NIV2011)** ¹¹ Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. Do not be afraid of him, declares the LORD, for I am with you and will save you and deliver you from his hands.
- D. That was the Lord's promise to Jeremiah and it is His promise to His children today.
- E. It made no difference to Jeremiah who sat on the throne of Judah, because he got his orders from the Lord enthroned in heaven, the Lord who promised always to be with him.

- F. When the servants of God are doing the will of God and trusting the promises of God, they can always be certain of the presence of God to help them accomplish the will of God.

VIII. Standing for Truth

- A. As we follow Jesus day by day, our lives will become more counter-cultural and this means we will be treated like traitors as was Jeremiah.
- B. Although we may cry tears and feel rejected by those with whom we speak the truth of God's word, God gives us strength to keep telling others about the results of sin and the hope He offers.
- C. Even in the assurance that sin would be punished, God offered words of hope; we read **Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV2011)** ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. In verse 10 the Lord God was clear that after 70 years of captivity in Babylon, God would fulfill His promises and restore His people.
- D. Jeremiah prophesied that the coming Messiah would establish a new covenant. This new covenant would have the power to transform hearts and minds. Jesus fulfilled every covenant promise prophesied.
- E. We can rejoice today that the covenant is no longer written on stones but on our hearts. The new covenant is established forever **Hebrews 9:15 (NIV2011)** ¹⁵ For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.
- F. Remember as we face tears, rejection, getting into "good" trouble for the Gospel, like Jeremiah remember what God begins, He will complete and it is always too soon to quit.