



Jeremiah 1:4-10
“I Formed You”

4 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

6 Then said I: "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth."

7 But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.

8 Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD.

9 Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

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

Last week we talked about the historical setting of the book of Jeremiah, this week our focus is upon Jeremiah himself and how his prophetic ministry began. And it doesn't begin with *"and then I, Jeremiah, looked around and saw how bad things were in Judah, and since no one had yet invented talk-radio, I decided that I would go to Jerusalem and give everyone a piece of my mind live and in person."*

No Jeremiah did not call himself to the ministry, neither did he just fall into it. Here we see that Jeremiah's ministry was not his own decision or the result of fate, but rather, God called Him to it. No, *that's not exactly it either*, God *formed him for it*. God, the master potter had formed Jeremiah according to his own plan. Before he was even conceived and formed by God in the womb, God had predestined that Jeremiah would be His prophet to the nations.

Now that's not just true of Jeremiah. While God doesn't call everyone to be His prophet, he knows everyone long before they are born, and he forms them all according to His plans for them.

So, answering the question, who made me? God made you! Is actually excellent theology

God forms us in the womb, but He knows us before then, when he makes us, he is working according to a plan known to Him before the foundation of the world. As David put it in Psalm 139:16 ***"Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them."***

So God wants Jeremiah to have the reassurance, that his calling was part of God's eternal plan. When God called Him to be His messenger, he didn't suddenly decide that on the spot and hope it would turn

out right, rather he ordained it. The same is true of every true messenger of God, as Jesus said to His Apostles **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”** (John 15:16)

Therefore remember this, you are not the product time and chance, who you are, where you live, when you live, everything that happens to you. NONE of it is a mistake. They are all what they are by the will of God. And this is the God who does all things well.

The fact that Jeremiah did not call and appoint himself to the role of prophet is reemphasized by his reluctance to take it on. He protests he cannot speak because he’s a youth. That’s actually a good sign, feeling inadequate for the task is the way many of God’s prophets began. Isaiah for instance felt to sinful to enter into the ministry, Moses like Jeremiah also didn’t feel like he could speak well enough to speak for God - *Exodus 4:10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."*

Jeremiah has even more reason to object to his call than Moses because he was probably only a teenager when this call came, and he protests he is too young, while Moses received his call when he was 80 years old.

How does God answer his objection though? Does he say to Jeremiah, *don’t worry about it, you’re a better speaker than you think? Or I’m sure you’ll think of something.* No, rather he says, I’ll send you, and you’ll speak what I want you to, He even touches him and puts his words in Jeremiah’s mouth and this speaks to the essential feature of prophecy. God never left it up to the prophet to decide what to say, He gave him the words He wanted spoken, He inspired them. God used the prophet, his expressions, his background, his knowledge, but ultimately the words they spoke were entirely the word of God, *2 Peter 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”*

Now it is almost certainly the case that part of his reluctance was simple fear, fear of public speaking – I don’t know if you know what that’s like – there have been times when my entire body has been wracked with tremors and every thought has gone out of my head as I’ve prepared to speak, then there is fear of the way his words will be received by some very dangerous people. Well he is told he needn’t fear, not because he is a superman, but because God will go with him. The people of God in the wilderness were weaker than all their enemies and yet they were safe, because GOD Himself was with them.

Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' (Isa. 41:10)

The Lord tells Him not to be afraid of any man, and reassures him that he will be with Him. This has been true of many of God’s prophets - Regent Morton said at the open grave of John Knox " There lies he who never feared the face of man."

So to know this Christian, when Christ is with us, we needn’t fear. 1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

If Christ is not with us, then we should always be afraid, for not even the strongest army or the highest walls can keep us safe, particularly from the wrath of God. *As Jesus himself said in Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*

Now what kind of ministry is Jeremiah being called to?

Everybody wants to be called to something important but they want it to be all nice, we want to build, and encourage. When we speak to people we want to say nice things to them. In the church, this means that ministers will want to preach the gospel, but not the law, they want to add members, but not to exercise discipline over them. They want to agree with people, they don't want conflict, so they would rather ignore evil than confront it. They want to have something nice to say, even when it's not true. That was precisely the course the false prophets of Jeremiah's time were following, they preached that *God was happy with Judah, and that they were doing just fine and that all would be well. They said "Peace, peace!" When there is no peace.* These things encouraged and comforted the people, but they were lies, and they did nobody any real good. Quite the opposite, they made the real reform that was necessary, impossible. After all, if everything you're doing and believing is fine and dandy, why change?

God however makes clear from the very beginning of Jeremiah's ministry that before there can be any building there must first be demolition. It's like this Israel was like an unsafe building with a bad foundation. The false prophets just kept building on the existing structure and the higher it got, the more inevitable it became that it would eventually come crashing down. God instead says that the existing shack must first be demolished, and the rubble cleared away, and only then can a new strong building on a firm foundation built in it's place. That would be Jeremiah's calling, to pronounce that the Lord had condemned the old kingdom and would soon clear them away sending them into exile for 70 years, but he would return them and reconstitute them and build in the place of the old kingdom a kingdom made without hands that would never pass away, and put on the throne a king who would rule forever.

That is the way it must be with us as well, before we can be built up, we must first be torn down. What do I mean by that? Well as we are when we come into this world, spiritually dead in our sins, it will do us no good to merely add something to us. We don't need a little improvement, we need recreation, we need a new beginning, be born again. So the old us, needs to go away, we need to brought to an end of ourselves, shown how impossible our state really is. That is why the first job of the preacher is to tear down. To plow up the soil of the hardened heart to prepare it for the gospel seed:

William Tyndale "But expound the law truly, and open the veil of Moses, to condemn all flesh, and prove all men sinners, and all deeds under the law, before mercy have taken away the condemnation thereof, to be sin and damnable: and then, as a faithful minister, breech the cask of the mercy of our Lord Jesus, and let the wounded consciences drink of the water of Him. And then shall your preaching be with power, and not as the doctrine of the hypocrites ; and the Spirit of God shall work with you, and all consciences shall bear record unto you, and feel that it is so."

2 Applications: God Called Jeremiah not only to salvation, but to His Vocation:

I want to speak to those who need that recreating work
AND

Those who have already been recreated but have not yet recognized they are also called to work for God

1) To those who have not yet heard His voice God is Calling YOU today. And here I'm particularly addressing those of you who are here, but aren't really here. Those of you who come to church perhaps, but immediately begin to drift away. Your mind roams freely, or the devil simply whispers in your ear "go to sleep". I'm not going to call you out by name, but the fact that your eyes are opened doesn't fool me or any experienced minister. Sometimes we'll catch you when you're startled when other people laugh.

What is the problem? Is it the minister, the message, no it's the heart that is receiving it - 9 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'

10 "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed."

You can no more hear than a deaf man – Isa. 42:18 " Hear, you deaf; And look, you blind, that you may see.

Mark 7:37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Today make haste and cry out to the Lord that he would give you new

2) To you who have that heart, but doubt, like Jeremiah that you have the ability to do anything for the Lord God called weak men to do great work that he might get the glory, Gideon, David, Peter, Paul

"From the foot of the cross, where we are cradled in our second birth, to the brink of the river, where we lay down our armor, there is a path which he has prepared for us to walk in." – FB Meyer

Perhaps you fear the prospect of speaking to hostile world – particularly those of you who are young – ***"While on his way to the meeting of the Diet, an old soldier put his hand on Luther's shoulder and repeated the memorable words : "My poor monk ! my poor monk ! thou art on thy way to make such a stand as I and many of my knights have never done in our toughest battle. If thou art sure of the justice of thy cause, then forward in the name of God, and be of good courage—God will not forsake thee."***