

August 29

Scriptures: Read Jeremiah 1 & 2

Key Verse: “I am with you to deliver you” (Jeremiah 1:8)

Overview

In chapter one, we are told that Jeremiah came from a priestly family that lived in Anathoth, a city in the territory of Benjamin designated for the priests from Aaron’s family; it was located about four kilometers northeast of Jerusalem (cf. Josh. 21:18). Although he was a priest by birth, he became a prophet by divine call. Before Jeremiah was even born, the Lord “knew”, “sanctified” (set apart for a special purpose) and “ordained” him to be a prophet (spokesman) for God (1:5); this speaking of God’s sovereignty and omniscience (cf. Ps. 139; Acts 15:18). When Moses was called by God, he felt unable and unequipped (Ex. 4:10). When Isaiah was called, he felt “unclean” (Isa. 6:5), and when Jeremiah was called, he felt unworthy. His young age (likely early twenties) and the magnitude of the responsibility must have seemed overwhelming, but whomever God calls, He will also equip. Though Jeremiah was timid and weak, God chose him so he would have to trust and depend fully on the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-29). The Lord plainly told Jeremiah that virtually everyone, including the kings, princes, and priests, would be against him because of the message God would give him to proclaim, but when God promised to be with him to deliver him, Jeremiah gave no more excuses (1:8, 18). He was surely an extraordinary young man of faith.

Jeremiah’s lips were touched by the Lord in an inauguration ceremony, similar to that of Isaiah and other men of God (cf. Isa. 6:7; Dan. 10:16; Ezek. 2:8-10). It signified the imparting of certain gifts so that God might equip His servant for the special task of being His spokesman. As well as giving Jeremiah the words to say, the Lord also gave him strength, boldness, and authority to be a part of God’s plan in announcing the judgments of destruction upon the sinful people; this was to be his main message. However, through also announcing prophecies of God’s mercy, he would “build” and “plant” (1:10), thereby strengthening the faith of the righteous remnant and helping to bring restoration.

The two signs confirming Jeremiah’s divine commission were, firstly, the “branch of an almond tree”, possibly signifying that just as the almond tree is the first tree of the season to hastily bud and blossom, so God would hastily perform and fulfill all the prophecies that Jeremiah would speak (1:11-12). The second sign, that of the “boiling pot”, is clearly interpreted within the text as referring to Babylon’s invasion of Judah because of her wickedness and idolatry (1:15).

Jeremiah’s first sermon from the Lord, found in chapter two, indicates that God had indeed equipped him with the necessary gifts to be the Lord’s spokesman. He combines eloquent speech with compassion and a sense of urgency, for God’s message was of utmost importance. How heartbreaking it must have been for Jeremiah to not only pronounce the judgment upon his own people but also envision it. It is no wonder he is called “the weeping prophet”. Through him, the Lord reminded the people of Judah of His goodness and faithfulness and of their former loving relationship and obedience to Him. But now they were full of rebelliousness and ingratitude. The rulers and priests did not seek God, nor did they know Him, thus they led the people astray. They

abandoned their God, who was their glory, and defiled their land by seeking other gods (“harlotry”; 2:20; Isa. 42:8; 2 Kings 17:5); this was something no other nation had done, for every other nation had a certain god over its land to whom it remained loyal, but Judah was not loyal to the one and only true God. For these reasons, punishment was inevitable.

The Lord God compares Himself to a spring of “living water”, that is fresh, sweet, continually flowing, and necessary for true life (John 4:13-14; 7:37-38; Isa. 55:1-2), but He compares the idols to broken cisterns, which are totally useless and benefit no one; if they do contain any water, it is stagnant and rancid. Likewise the water of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon is “evil and bitter” (2:18-19). Why then should Judah sin and backslide in eagerly trying to form alliances with the heathen (though in vain, 2:37), and in trying to be like them by worshipping their idols rather than trusting in God, the living water? Because of their continuous backsliding, the once choice vine that God had lovingly tended had become a degenerate vine which had to be trampled down (cf. 2:21; Isa. 5:1-7; John 15:1-7). Their sin reached the point where it was carved deeply like a permanent and visible tattoo on them (2:22), and yet they refused to see it, claiming themselves to be undefiled (2:35). But one day their sin would put them to shame, as it will for all unrepentant people on the great judgment day.

Prayer

Thank You, Lord, that when You call someone to do a task, You also equip and promise to be with him or her. May we be bold to carry out Your will in our lives today.