

The Calling of Jeremiah

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The ministry of a true prophet in the nation of Israel was directed and guided by the strong conviction that he was under control by a divine call to speak on behalf of God. In today's sermon passage (Jeremiah 1:4-10), which is an account of Jeremiah's call, one would notice that it is similar to the callings of Moses (Exodus 3:1-4:17), Isaiah (Isaiah 6), and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1-3:15). The phrases in verse 5, "Before I formed you" and "Before you were born" indicate that God bestowed his grace upon Jeremiah from the time of the prophet's conception in his mother's womb. God's words, "I knew you," "I set you apart," and "I appointed you", are terms of a covenantal relationship. Verse 5 clearly tells us that God has established a special covenantal relationship with his spokesperson before his birth. Being set apart before birth is the basis or foundation of Jeremiah's prophetic standing. Therefore, the one who has been called is under obligation to be obedient to the one who calls. The apostle Paul described a similar experience in his own calling to preach to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:11-20).

Although Jeremiah's message is chiefly for Judah, but he also has words of judgment for other nations as well (25:8-37; 46-51). God said to Jeremiah, "I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." This same call was given to the apostles through Christ Jesus and it is the foundation of the Church's mission to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Jeremiah 1:6-7 further demonstrates the theological principle that God's decision to call a person is not guided by the human wisdom or understanding that God's words are with the experts or the experienced. God equips the one He called with the promise of his presence (v. 8), with his personal touch (v. 9), and He will place his own words in that person's mouth (Jeremiah 15:16 and Ezekiel 3:2). Jeremiah's task is to faithfully announce to the nations the swiftness with which God is going to fulfill his threats and promises.

God expects faithfulness and courage from his chosen people, particularly his spokesperson—faithfulness in proclaiming God's truth and courage to endure opposition. "I am with you" (v.8) is an assurance of protection and safety. God is determined "to defend and support" his prophet (Clarke, 257). It is imperative for us to understand that this is a call to abandon self-reliance and self-sufficiency and to trust in the presence and power of God. We are called to be the salt of the Earth and the light of the world, but this can be accomplished only if we are in Christ.

References:

Asbury Bible Commentary
Reformation Study Bible Commentary