

## "The Call"

Jeremiah 1:4–5 (ESV) 4 Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Wow. Do you realize what this means? We could spend the entire sermon on this one verse. God says you existed at least in my mind before I ever created you. Before I formed you...I knew you.

That term "knew you" is not a term of intellectual knowledge. It goes way beyond that. When that term is used in the Bible it speaks of the closest relationship possible. It is the term used for intimacy in marriage.

It means that God has a complete understanding of the total person as a thinking, willing and feeling being. So does that mean that we existed before we were conceived? Is God saying that our souls were in heaven with Him before He placed us in a womb? No. The Bible does not support that idea anywhere else. It doesn't suggest our preexistence but rather God's foreknowledge.

God's knowing us is different and outside the natural realm of how we know something. God is omniscient (all knowing) and His eternality (always existing) makes it possible for Him to have knowledge of someone before conception. God is not limited by time. He sees the past, present and future at all times.

God existed in eternity past. He exists now, and He will exist will continue to exist in eternity future. God is eternal. God is also omnipresent. Present in every moment of time, past present, and future. God is also omniscient (all-knowing). He is able to have knowledge of someone before conception or something before it occurs.

The text indicates that, when God spoke of knowing man prior to his being formed, He was speaking from His foreknowledge— His omniscience. Foreknowledge does not support the idea of a pre-existence, but rather of God's pre-knowledge, [be]fore-knowledge, because God is eternally existent in past, present, and future all at the same time.

When God says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you," it is not speaking of a pre-existent being, but of God's foreknowledge to speak of things that are yet to come into existence as if they already exist because they will, with all certainty, exist.

Isaiah 42:9 (ESV) 9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."

Matthew 24:36 (ESV) 36 "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

Romans 4:17 (ESV) 17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

So God told Jeremiah....I knew you before I conceived of you in the womb.

God does the same thing for us today. He does not see us as we used to be in our sins...He sees who we are going to become in the future. Righteous people just like Jesus.

This is an incredible statement by God. It suggests predestination. I sets the beginning of life perhaps before conception. Once God knows something to exist, it will exist.

This idea reminds us of other Scriptures....

Psalm 139:14–16 (ESV) 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Talk about a truth bomb dropped on an abortion clinic. Millions of God's creations...people He foreknew....people He created in the womb...have been killed since the 1973 Roe vs Wade Supreme Court Decision.

When does human life begin? Well in God's mind we have existed well before we were ever conceived. As soon as He thought of us we were as good as alive. So my answer to when does life begin at conception or birth? Conception. But not when the embryo begins but when God conceives of us in His mind. We exist as soon as God thinks of us.

Later..in Chapter 29...Jeremiah will be instructed by God to say something that Jeremiah had personally experienced. "I know the plans that I have for you"

God knew the plans that He had for Jeremiah....He created Him uniquely and specifically for a purpose.

While you were still in the womb...I consecrated you. I set you apart for my sacred purposes. You were pre-destined to my service.

So when we read, "'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you;" We could translate that to: "Before I gave you life I knew you; in fact, before you were born I had selected you for my service."

Think about how timely this message was for Jeremiah. He lived in a culture where human life meant nothing. God meant nothing. God's plans meant nothing.

They had once been considered the people of God...ordained to His service...and they had completely removed any trace of their ordination.

You can't look at the times of Jeremiah and not see ourselves. All manner of obscenities have penetrated our culture—our airwaves, our telephones, our music, even our communities and families. We have ceased to be God's people as a nation. We have walked away from our ordination as well.

Jeremiah 1:4–5 (ESV) 4 The Word of the Lord came to me....."I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

The Word of the Lord came to me. Notice a few things here. The Word means the essence, truth, and presence of God. Not just words...the very essence and presence of God came to Jeremiah.

Notice that the Word came to Jeremiah. He did not go and get it. He did not try to obtain it. He didn't declare Himself to be a prophet. He didn't go to Prophet School. He was a young adult...minding his own business...not bothering anyone...and boom God spoke to him, called Him and told Him why He created him. .

People who are called to be prophets in the Old Testament are usually not real happy about it. They are being called by God to a life of rejection, isolation, persecution, and frustration. They carry the burden of that call. They are often physically and emotionally abused. They are treated as outcasts. Usually their own family rejects them.

God said....Ok I have plans for you....these plans existed before you actually did....I have set you apart to be My Prophet to the Nations. Can you imagine how crazy this must have sounded to Jeremiah? That morning he was just some 18 year old eating his cornflakes and now he finds out he is on a mission from God. Whatever plans he had for the future just God rearranged.

God tells him....you are going to be a prophet and there is not a darn thing that you can do about it. I have decided and my word is as good as done.

I love that God speaks to our potential, not where we are now. He sees who we are going to become and He speaks to us as if it is already completed. Because from God's perspective it is.

Do you remember Gideon? Gideon had really accomplished nothing in life. The Midianites were poised to attack them. Gideon had not fought a single battle yet...and look at how the angel of the Lord addressed him...not where he was but who he would become. God had already credited to him his victories.

Judges 6:12 (ESV) 12 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor."

I LOVE THAT! Gideon you are a mighty man of valor...you don't know it yet....you don't feel it yet...but it is as good as done...and God says, I choose to see you there...now.

I often wonder...How God would address you and me....How does God see us today....knowing our potential tomorrow?

God said that He was setting aside Jeremiah to be His Prophet. What does that mean exactly?

The Office of Prophet in the Old Testament was reserved for those who truly spoke for God. They revealed information from God that was not otherwise known. God was literally putting His words out through their voice box to speak to man. What they said carried the same weight and authority as Scripture because it came straight from God. God spoke directly to Adam and Eve, He spoke directly to Moses on Mt Sinai....He continued those Discussions with Moses in the Tabernacle between the Cherubim and now He dialogs with man through selected Prophets.

True prophets never spoke on their own authority or shared their personal opinions, but rather delivered the message God himself gave them. Several texts make this explicit. God promised Moses, "Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (Exod. 4:12). God assured Moses, "I will raise up for [my people] a prophet like you . . . and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him" (Deut. 18:18).

We will see in a little bit that the Lord said to Jeremiah, "I have put my words in your mouth" (Jer 1:9). God commissioned Ezekiel by saying, "You must speak my words to them" (Ezek. 2:7). And many of the OT prophetic books, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Zephania, and Jonah, begin with the words, "The word of the LORD that came to . . ." Amos claimed, "This is what the LORD says" .

They only spoke the Words God gave them....exactly....precisely...without embellishment....and without their own opinion or interpretation. They never added or took away from what God said and they never tried to smooth over the angst that these words caused people.

Their message was a warning by God of things to come that could be avoided if they confessed, repented and turned their hearts back to God. Often their message foretold the future and pointed to the Messiah to come. Often the Prophet would use God's words to convict, to judge and to explain why God's wrath was soon to be evident. They were literally the voice box of God to man.

But today....like back in Jeremiah's day...many claimed to be prophets of God who were not.

Deuteronomy 18:20–22 (ESV) 20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.' 21 And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?'— 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.

Jeremiah 23:16 (ESV) 16 Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.

Jeremiah 14:14 (ESV) 14 And the Lord said to me: "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.

Ezekiel 22:28 (ESV) 28 And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord God,' when the Lord has not spoken.

No one really wanted to be a true prophet of God because they would have to tell the people the truth. Many however, profited by claiming to be a prophet of God and telling people what they want to hear.

They aren't Prophets....they are PROFITS.

Judah was full of false prophets just as our nation is today. They are everywhere. They make up tales...they tell people what they want to hear...they manipulate people out of their money in God's name...And yet God hasn't destroyed them yet. He lets them continue to spread their lies...Why?

Deuteronomy 13:1–5 (ESV) 1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.

Wait a minute.....For the Lord your God is testing you? He is testing you to see if you love Him with all of your heart? To see if you know and obey only His voice? My sheep know my voice....can you tell the real voice of God from a fake? This is a test...

Ok but how do we know if a prophet is speaking God's words or their own? Well some say....if it comes true it is from God....that is not in Scripture and that thought is dangerous. Let's look at what God really says.

Deuteronomy 18:21–22 (ESV) 21 And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?' — 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.

If God says it...it must happen. But just because it happens doesn't mean God said it.

Every word from God is true and will be fulfilled. But if a false prophet predicts something and it happens...that doesn't mean the message is from God. You can get lucky sometimes.

Ok if God is speaking through Elijah and calls down fire from heaven to light up Mt Carmel....It proves that Elijah is a true prophet of God. He said it and it immediately happened.

But what about the prophecies about end times....about the future Messiah? No one knew in their lifetime if that message was true or not...

God said that He allows false prophets in order to test us...to see if we truly love the Lord with all of our heart.

Well looking to see if what they say happens comes true doesn't give any indication of our love of the Lord with all of our heart....What is God talking about? How do we pass this test?

Think about this...Think about the person on this earth that you know the best....your relationship with them is deep...you have tons of experiences with them...you have seen them in all kinds of circumstances...you speak to them often. You know their words, their likes, dislikes, their character....you KNOW them.

Now suppose you are at a social event and someone comes up to you and says, "I heard something from \_\_\_\_\_ today and here is what he/she says...."

How long would they have to speak before you knew if the words they were saying came from that person you know so well? Because you know that person so well....you know not only what they would say but how they would say it. You know the types of phrases they use, the type of examples they illustrate, even the manner in which they explain things.

God tells the Israelites....I am testing you....not to see if you can discern truth from fiction...not to see if you can tell what has or will come to pass or not....look at what the Scripture says....

Deuteronomy 13:3–5 (ESV) For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.

What God is saying is this....You will know words that come from me if you truly know me. If you love me with all of you heart and all of your soul....if you truly love me...you know my commandments and you obey them...you have been with me so long that you recognize my words and obey them....more than that you trust them over all else.

Jeremiah 9:23–24 (ESV) 23 Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."

You guys know me pretty well...suppose I was away from all of you on a trip and someone came in and said...I have a message from Frank about the church.

They pull out a handwritten message and begin reading.. Frank wants us to know that "We have been far too serious about following God's word. We should just lighten up a bit on the passages that bother people. God is coming back so we should all relax take care of ourselves and wait for Him to sort all of this out. Until then we should just do what is fun and doesn't hurt anyone. Sadly, not everyone can come from the Great State of New York and thus we should be understanding and patient with them. Besides not everyone loves the Big Apple like I do. There is nothing like Northern Hospitality. I can't wait to get back to you and share a mushroom pizza and some sweet tea. Sorry for the handwritten message, I love keeping everything on paper because I can't ever figure out how to use a computer, so paper for me forever. See you all soon."

You are laughing because you know me. If you didn't know me...this message might be considered a serious one.

People who spend time in the Holy Place with God...who pray...who meditate on His Scriptures...who abide in Him...they know...they recognize...the Word of the Lord. They love Him so much, they have spent so much time in His Scriptures, So much time in prayer...they know Him. They know the original so a counterfeit is obvious.

They can almost instantly determine if a word is from God or not. They don't decide it...they recognize it...they know in their heart and soul is the message is authentic. In the Old Testament they did not have the presence of the Holy Spirit inside of them. They had a much harder time than we should have.

Today, when we hear someone speak for God or about God we have an instant alarm system built into us. Something is not right in our gut...we know something is wrong.

The Holy Spirit is screaming at us to not listen..to run...those who know God intimately immediately heed that voice.

Those who don't love the Lord with all of their heart and soul don't listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit...they chase after teachers and false prophets who tell them what they want to hear.

So God says....it is a test for you.

Deuteronomy 10:3-4 For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.

A list of seven things that God is looking for to see if we pass His test related to false prophets.

1) Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all of your soul

- 2) Walk after the Lord your God...follow Him...Abide with Him
- 3) Fear Him...have respect and reverence for Him.
- 4) Keep His commandments....follow the Laws and live them out.
- 5) Obey His Voice...do what the prophetic word says to do
- 6) Serve Him...sacrifice your desires for His.
- 7) Hold Fast to Him....no matter what everyone else does or what happens.

When a Prophet of God spoke in the Old Testament....if you truly knew God intimately....you immediately recognized the Words that came from Him and you obeyed them.

It wasn't that you decided those words are God's. People didn't vote to decide. The Words of the True Prophet had a character to them...a presence to them...a power in them...that true followers of God instantly recognized. It wasn't that they decided these were God's words and declared them as such. They were God's words and they just recognized His essence in them.

The same thing happened when the Words of God were put in written form. God spoke through over 30 different authors though a time frame of over 1000 years.

Some writings carried the authority of God and some were just fanciful imaginary tails of the imagination of people.

When it came time to canonize or declare which texts were actually the Words from God....man didn't decide if a book was from God or not....certain books were clearly from God and they just recognized that truth. God ordained the written word as He breathed it through the various authors and He revealed to those organizing the cannon which books already possessed the authority of His Word. We didn't choose the 66 books of the Bible. God did and then just revealed them to us.

Ok so the Old Testament Prophets are pretty easy to understand. God spoke, they spoke, people choose what to do with the message. But what about people today who call themselves prophets? What about those who say they have the spiritual gift of prophecy?

The gift of prophecy is completely different from the office of Prophet in the Bible. Someone demonstrating the gift of prophecy....has a momentary deeper understanding of the things of God. They are not given direct words from God to speak, they are given an impression...a thought...and idea. It is not some gift that someone owns. Any believer in Christ who has the Holy Spirit can at any point receive a revelation from God. Let me show you a very well know example. Jesus asked the Disciples "But who do you say I am? And Peter answered, You are the Christ the Son of the Living God."

Matthew 16:17 (ESV) 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

God gave Peter that answer in that moment. God revealed to Him something that He did not otherwise know. Peter was bringing a deeper revelation from God that aligned with Scripture.

Thus, prophecy is not based on a hunch, supposition, inference, educated guess, or even sanctified wisdom. Prophecy is the human report of a divine revelation. Prophecy is always based on a spontaneous revelation.

It is almost a shame that the same word is used to describe an Old Testament Prophet and the Gift of Prophecy. I would much prefer the Spiritual Gift used in the New Testament be called "revelation or insight" I also don't think anyone today should dare call themselves a prophet. They may intermittently have the gift of prophecy but they in no way have been given the Office of Prophet like those of the Old Testament.

The Spiritual gift of prophecy is given only to believers who have trusted Jesus and received the Holy Spirit. Old Testament Prophets spoke of judgment and condemnation. The words from those with the Spiritual gift of prophecy only share words that are about encouraging us, supporting us, letting us know that God is on our side as we follow what He has revealed in Scripture.

1 Corinthians 14:3 (ESV) 3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

It is what we would call the guiding or prompting of the Holy Spirit. It is not God directly speaking through a prophet but rather someone perceiving something is from God and in alignment with Scripture. The thought they have that they think is from God is encouraging....builds us up...lifts our spirits....provides comfort and consolation.

That is one of the ways if you know if someone giving you a prophetic word is possibly relaying a message from God. If it is condemning, judging, harsh, threatening...you can immediately dismiss it...There is no condemnation for those in Christ and these words are not from God.

What is said does not align with Scripture and it must. Scripture stands in authority over anyone who claims to have a prophetic word today.

But here is the kicker for us today. Someone who has the Spiritual Gift of prophecy could totally blow it. They could completely misinterpret what God is trying to show them. For that reason, we are told that every word of prophecy has to be tested by those who are mature in the faith.

That doesn't make sense to us because we still try to link the Old Testament Prophets with the prophetic word today...Truthfully a lot of deception occurs because people actually call themselves prophets today....usually, right before declaring themselves as the Messiah or Cult Leader.

So we ask, How can a word from God...who is perfect and without error...be wrong? We can't wrap our minds around that. How could someone with the Spiritual Gift of Prophecy be wrong half of the time or more? Old Testament Prophets we have read were not allowed to be wrong...not once. Believers with the Gift of Prophecy can be wrong all the time. In fact, it is expected that they might be wrong.

How can the message be wrong if it is from God? Well It is potentially fallible because the person's perception of the revelation, biases about the revelation, and explanation of the revelation are all fallible. God is given a word through fallible humans.

Today....prophecies are Spirit prompted Human Words....They are not God's Words....they are not scripture...they must stand up to the test of Scripture and the discerning thoughts of the Holy Spirit.

A lot of people dismiss all of those who utter prophetic words today because they are not always true. They dismiss not only the word but the person. They hold people with the Spiritual Gift of Prophecy to the standard of those with the Office of an Old Testament Prophet.



But look at the warning Paul gives us...

1 Thessalonians 5:19–22 (ESV) 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

We are to accept the Prophetic Human Words given to us...test it...keep what God reveals to be authentic and avoid all evil.

Do not quench the Spirit and do not despise prophecies. For example, someone may feel a prompting from God to encourage someone. To share a Scripture with them, to give them a worship song, to share an impression, to share a word.

We are not to hate that...we are not to recoil at the thought of it....we should listen and then before even thinking about it, present it to God in prayer and test it. It may or may not be from God. It could just be a spiritualized version of someone's imagination. It could be an attempt by Satan to manipulate you. Or it could be a message from God that has been distorted by the person revealing it to you. Or it could be a huge blessing of encouragement and comfort during a time of need.

Here is the way to remember this. We should have humble expectations that the prophecy will not be taken as a word of Scripture but as a Spirit-prompted human word to be weighed by Scripture, and by mature spiritual wisdom. For a prophecy to be accepted as valid it should find an echo in the hearts of spiritually mature people. It should be confirmed by biblically saturated insight. And it should find a resonance in the hearts and minds of those who have the mind of Christ and are ruled by his peace. And it should build you up and /or bring you comfort that you know is a touch from God.

But this still bothers a lot of us right? This really bothers our Western Minds. How can you have a direct revelation from God and be wrong about what you say? If what you say is fallible how can it be from God? Why would I have to test something that God says.... to see if it is right? I have been burned by people claiming to have this gift...do I really have to listen to them...God says...yes.

Our problem here is not that we know about the Spiritual Gift of Prophecy...but rather that we can't separate the Office of Prophet in the Old Testament from the sharing of a prophetic word today.

Let me use another Spiritual Gift that will help us understand this dilemma. I believe that at times God gives me the gift of instruction or teaching. I spend a lot of hours each week preparing sermons, listening to God, Praying through every word....We all understand that teaching is a Spiritual Gift....but you are told to test what I say against Scripture to see if it is correct. But that doesn't seem to bother us too much. Even when we have been burned by false teachers...we still agree that solid teaching is what feeds our souls. We don't quit coming to the table because one meal was bad.

The gift of teaching is the Spirit-prompted, Spirit-sustained act of explaining biblical truth for the edification of the church. And all of us would say it is tremendously valuable in the life of the church. But would any of us say that the speech of a teacher, when he is exercising the gift of teaching, is infallible? No. Would we say it has divine authority? No. He is teaching under the authority of Scripture.

A teacher's perception of biblical truth is fallible; his analysis of biblical truth is fallible; his explanation of biblical truth is fallible. There is no guarantee that the link between an infallible Bible and the church will be an infallible link. The gift of teaching does not guarantee infallible teaching.

And yet, even though the gift of teaching is fallible and even though it lacks intrinsic, divine authority, we know it is of immense value to the church. We are all edified and built up by gifted teachers. God is in it. He does use it. It is a spiritual gift.

The Spiritual Gift of prophecy works in the same manner as teaching. The problem is not with the message...messages from God are always true and always in alignment with Scripture.

The problem, just like with teaching, is that the message is interpreted by fallible humans. God reveals something to the mind of a believer (in some way beyond ordinary sense perception- it is a divine revelation to them), and since God never makes a mistake, we know that his revelation is true. It has no error in it. But the gift of prophecy does not guarantee the infallible transmission of that revelation. The prophet may perceive the revelation imperfectly, he may understand it imperfectly, and he may deliver it imperfectly.

The gift of prophecy results in fallible prophecy just like the gift of teaching results in fallible teaching. So I would ask, "If teaching can be good for the edification of the church, could not prophecy be good for edifying as well?"

1 Thessalonians 5:19–22 (ESV) 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

It is not the prophet who is being tested as true or false. It is the prophecies that are being sifted for what is good and bad. This is not an either/or situation where you either have a true, infallible believer operating in the gift of prophecy or a false non-believer trying to mislead you. The true gift of prophecy...like teaching...operates within the domain of honest human mistakes.

So...Summarizing....Old Testament Prophets God spoke through them. Every Word they said was the equivalent of Scripture and most became Scripture. When they spoke...God Spoke.

Spiritual Gift of Prophecy....Just like the Gift of Teaching....a Direct Revelation from God but can be misinterpreted, poorly explained or not fully understood. It carries no weight until it is validated through Scripture. It can be very edifying to everyone just like Teaching.

Those who have a deeper relationship with God are positioned to know if the message is from God or not.

Many churches today have stagnated because they have quenched the Spirit by rejecting all prophetic words. They have misunderstood the Office of Prophet from the believer operating in the gift of prophecy.

I hope that helps. Ok back to our story of Jeremiah. God is calling him to be a true Old Testament Prophet and his response....He screams a guttural scream....

Jeremiah 1:6 (ESV) 6 Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth."

Ah or another word Alas...is a cry from the gut...Note there is an exclamation point here. Jeremiah has freaked. He blurts out the only thing He can think of. "I don't know how to speak....and I am only a youth!"

Those things are true...He is young...He doesn't speak well...Older people might dismiss him because of his age...but the problem is...God already knows all that stuff.

Most of the time, a prophet is not something anyone would aspire to. They have grown up watching these guys. They probably prayed "Please God don't make me a prophet?"

However they cannot reject the call....they all try....Moses said he couldn't speak well...Jeremiah will try to play the same card.

Like so many other biblical figures trembling under the weight of their commission, he sighed over his inabilities and inadequacies. God does not want us dwelling on our own incompetence. It belittles His design for us. It might sound humble in the sight of men, but it can be an insult to our Creator. Jeremiah is trying to tell God that he doesn't have the ability to do what God just told him he was created to do. It didn't work for Moses and it will not work for Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 1:7–8 (ESV) 7 But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord."

We never find God pampering cowardice. His response to Jeremiah's self-doubt in the vernacular might sound something like this. "Don't give Me that stuff! For you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak" (v. 7).

God's response is an acknowledgment of this social connection between age and respect for one's words. The people will be inclined to ignore Jeremiah because of his young age, but Jeremiah is not going in his own name and is not speaking for himself. He goes where God sends him; he speaks what God commands. The exhortation, do not be afraid, is not backed up with a revelation about what will happen to him and that he will be happy with the outcome, but on the unqualified promise by the Lord, I am with you, no matter what happens

Jeremiah 1:9–10 (ESV) 9 Then the Lord put out 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 set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

God tells him....you may seem young...but your are forgetting that I am standing right next to you....I will plants Myself between you Jeremiah and the people who will come to hate you for My words. "I am with you to deliver you" (v. 8). The large hands that hold the world reach down and touch the mouth of the trembling country boy. "I have put My words in your mouth" (v. 9). This touch forever set Jeremiah on an enterprise of courage, "to root out and to pull down ... to build and to plant" (v. 10).

Jeremiah 1:11–12 (ESV) 11 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And I said, "I see an almond branch." 12 Then the Lord said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it."

We just learned about the Almond Tree and its branch in our last series on the Tabernacle. It is the first tree to bloom in Spring often doing so in late January. It represents someone who has arrived early....is prepared...is watching for signs of life....

The tremor of a small flower seems so gentle, but the "branch of an almond tree" (v. 11) brings judgment to bear upon the imagery. God is saying here.... "I am ready to perform My word" (v. 12). A picture is formed of God staring fixedly at His people, studying them intently, watching their every move with a heavenly fascination.

God is giving Jeremiah an image...I am here...ready...I have been promising to fulfill my promises...the Season has arrived...I am fully bloomed...not as a flower but as a branch...a weapon. I will carry out my judgment...you will join me Jeremiah...it is the perfect time and season. What kind of season?

Jeremiah 1:13–16 (ESV) 13 The word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north." 14 Then the Lord said to me, "Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. 15 For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. 16 And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.

The second vision came also from the prophet's everyday experience. A boiling cauldron was a commonplace sight. Now it was infused with new meaning. The direction of the cauldron's steam indicated that the winds of adversity were blowing in from the north.

Jeremiah became the confidant of God by being told not to look to Egypt in the south, even though it was presently strong, and not to look to Assyria in the north and its past dominance. Instead he was told to keep his eyes trained on Babylon and on its subtle orchestration for power. This was the nation God would use to judge His people.

Jeremiah must be thinking ...oh great....this is my first sermon? I get to tell everyone this message? No softball warning first?

Think about how Jeremiah must have been processing all of this. Imagine you are 18 years old and you go out to Siesta Key to hang out. God calls you to be a prophet. You try to talk Him out of it and he gets a bit miffed and tells you to man up. Then he shows you a boiling pot of water that represents His wrath and judgement.

IMAGE I And God tells Him...I am raising up an army from the North...they are on their way down I75...already crossed in to Northern Florida...Their ships will be at Marina Jacks soon.....Everything you know....every place that you call home...Longboat Key...St Armand's Circle...Marina Jacks...Downtown...Sarasota High...Riverview...Booker...Ringling Museum...School of Art...everything is going to be completely destroyed. It will exist no more.

Plus people will die by the hundreds and I God will not care. They will starve to death..They will eat their Children...They will cry out for my help but I will ignore them....This judgment is just, swift, total and unrelenting. They will be ruled by another nation that they despise. Few that survive will be taken away in captivity.

Jeremiah doesn't ask...but His eyes were probably pleading for a reason....He has to deliver a horrible message...but first he has to wrap his mind around it. So God tries to help him gain a better grip.

Jeremiah 1:16–19 (ESV) 16 And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.

I think Jeremiah begins to understand exactly what he is about to face. This may be a just punishment....but delivering this message...to these people? They are going to kill me. If I come to them with this message....they will kill me. They do not want to hear from you God...they tend to kill the prophets.

Jeremiah 1:17-19 (ESV) 17 But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. 18 And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. 19 They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you."

Jeremiah's mission and future lifestyle were certainly not for the fainthearted. Neither is the imagery God uses Notice the architectural terms "a fortified city," "an iron pillar," and "bronze walls" They are solid and unshakeable like the God who conceived them and the prophet whom they would come to characterize. Jerusalem was soon to be a city no longer fortified. Its pillars were already crumbling. Its walls would be burned by the Babylonians. This was the news Jeremiah would have to deliver to ears that would not hear.

Notice the list...Kings...Officials....Priests...and the People of the Land....that is...by the way...EVERYONE. And here comes the news Jeremiah....they will all fight against you. Everyone you know....your family...those you read about in the news...your friends...your coworkers...every person you have ever laid eyes on...is going to hate you and fight against you...

But they will not prevail...note God doesn't say they can't touch you...or you are bulletproof...No He just says...in the end they will not win because I am with you.

Get your work clothes on Jeremiah....we are about to carry out my Word....Time to start planning a trip to Jerusalem.

Jeremiah is about to begin a 40 year journey. He will have only two converts. He will experience every kind of hardship....but in those difficult times, I am sure that He looked back to these words....God said I created you for this purpose...I set you apart in the womb....I will be with you...I will protect you...but you must speak exactly what I tell you to speak no matter what....and that we will see is an incredible journey of faith and obedience. Let's pray