

“God Is With You”

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024 -MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - “God Is With You”

In the Old Testament, much of what we read are stories and moments when God calls upon a person to be a mouthpiece to communicate to the children of Israel; they were called prophets. Jeremiah was not only a prophet, but was also a priest. This was a high calling, but also a dangerous one as he became a mouthpiece of God for the nation of Israel. As a priest, he preserved the past; as a prophet, he spoke toward the future. His message would not be positive; it would be powerful and repetitive and could cost him his life. When Jeremiah’s story opens, the southern kingdom of Israel, which was called Judah, finds itself in a pretty difficult predicament. Just a century earlier, the violent Assyrian Empire conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. The southern kingdom is on the verge of devastation, and an even stronger Babylonian Empire is on the horizon. And even though Judah had been led by one of the greatest and godliest kings in its history, King Josiah’s reforms didn’t get below the surface of the people’s lives. Their hearts had not been changed, only their political policies. They were just going through life, living to satisfy themselves, forsaking God and His ways, and using everything God had given them to serve themselves. Because of this, God is going to tear down and rebuild this nation in order to draw them into true relationship and dependence upon Him. Jeremiah, however, is not alone in this high and dangerous calling - God is with him! What we need to see is that God is also with us as believers in Jesus Christ. He may very well be working to tear down and rebuild certain aspects of our own lives in order to draw us closer to Him and lead us in the direction that He is going. We must trust that we, like Jeremiah, are not alone in the process - God is with us!

Scripture - Jeremiah 1:1-10

The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 2 to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. 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.” 6 Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” 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.” 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.”

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study

Psalm 23; Jeremiah 1:1-10, Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 2:5

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

Key Thoughts

Jeremiah's journal entry begins with God's calling upon him to be a prophet, but it is so much more than a job offer. It is a destination for Jeremiah. It did not begin when he was a young man; it was crafted and created in his mother's womb. And please know that this passage and others point to the beauty of God's creation beginning in the womb. (vs. 1-5)

- "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." God had you in His heart and mind; then he began to shape you. I love this picture. Because everything is purposeful. He did not shape you and go, "Oh, I did not know he would be able to speak that way, sing that way, or serve that way, so I'll use him differently. He knows you, then he forms you.
- "Before, I consecrated you (set you apart for a distinct purpose), and that purpose was an appointed prophet." Again, everything points toward God as a careful creator, equipping, preparing, and crafting us. You are not a mistake!
- Just as God, with power and authority, spoke every star into place, he also knew your time and place and put you on this planet in that time, the people, and the place. You are one of a kind!

We are created, crafted, and called by God. What we are and how God created us are God's gift to us; what we do with this creation is our gift to Him.

When we come to scripture and hear the works of God accomplished through the names of David, Moses, Esther, or Nehemiah, we sometimes think they were without fault or fear, but the opposite is true. Jeremiah saw the work before him, the wickedness around him, and, lastly, his weakness (vs. 6).

Your excuse to God's calling on your life might be radically different from Jeremiah:

- · I'm too young
- · I'm too old (I'm in the retirement phase)
- · I'm too tired
- · I'm too new in my faith
- · I don't have experience
- · I've gone through a nasty divorce
- · I'm broken because of my childhood or my past
- · I'm weary
- · I don't trust.

God gives Jeremiah 3 basic instructions (vs. 6-8):

- Go - Go where I sent you.
- Speak - What I command, speak
- Don't be afraid - I am with you.

Key Thoughts

God's reply to our excuses: I am with you (vs. 8). God's comfort to Jeremiah is based on the reality that he will be with him to deliver him. These are the words God gives to everyone throughout Scripture that He has designed: "I will be with you."

- Abraham and Sarah - didn't say they were too young for God to move; instead, they claimed they were too old, but God reminded them and proved, "I will be with you."
- Moses when Moses was called to go to Pharaoh and tell him to "let my people go," even though Moses was a wanted criminal in Egypt and was afraid to return. "I am with you."
- Joshua when Joshua was convinced that Moses' shoes were too big for him to fill. "I am with you."
- Gideon when Gideon was sure that God had chosen the wrong person to deliver Israel from the Midianites. "I am with you."
- Solomon when he was convinced he couldn't live up to his father David's legacy. "I am with you."
- Jesus passed onto his disciples in his Great Commission and the words that Paul gave to Timothy as he passed the torch from the early church to the next generation. "I am with you."
- The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews says, "I am with you; I will never leave you or forsake you."

It's what God continues to say to all of us who his great imagination has designed: "I will be with you. I designed you for my purposes and my glory. If you let me continue to form and make you, I will help you step into your divine design."

What we are and how God created us are God's gift to us; what we do with this creation is our gift to Him.

This is a truth that each of us needs to allow to sink deep into our hearts as believers: God is with you. He has not forgotten you. And, in fact, He has plans to use you. No matter your age. These words must be poured over your doubts of insignificance: I am with you. These words need to be etched onto your broken heart. I am with you.

This gives weight to Jeremiah's words because they are no longer His words; they are from the mouth of God. And when we read God's word today, it still penetrates because this word of God speaks.

- The word of God spoke creation into existence, and it formed you.
- The word of God upholds the universe by its power. (Hebrews 1:3)
- The word of God moves where it desires, breaks down, and destroys to replant and build.
- We live in a world that desires suggestions and thoughts, but God speaks in directives.

While God may not be calling you to a nation, he is calling you to make disciples. He has not stopped calling, and he has not left you unequipped. He has formed you, placed you, and prepared you. If you allow him, he might take the very excuse you pose as problematic and use it as His greatest tool in your life.

Our calling is the same today as it was to Jeremiah: Go (Great Commission), Speak His Word (Expect God to move), Trust ("I am with you. I am with you. I will not leave you.") (Matthew 28:18-20)



Reflect & Respond

We see in the prophet Jeremiah, a calling from God on his life to go, speak, and to not fear. Can you think of a time where you believed that God was calling you to something? Did you go? Did you speak? Did you not fear? What did this look like?

Jeremiah's initial excuse to not go, not speak, and to fear was that he felt he was too young. What excuses have you made, or perhaps are currently making, that have kept you, or are keeping you, from pursuing, or perhaps even seeking, who, where, or what God is calling you to?

We see in Jeremiah's life that the primary reason he is not to fear is because of the truth that "God is with him." How does this truth, "God is with you", bring you peace, comfort, and perhaps even courage in the area that He has called you into?

Read Jeremiah 1:5. Here we get a look into several attributes of God: His transcendence (over all creation), omnipotence (all powerful), omnipresence (outside of time as we know it), and His immanence (that He is with us). What thoughts/feelings does this raise for you considering that God also knew you before He formed you in your mother's womb? What does it cause you to think/feel regarding God and his plans for you? What does this do for you regarding the calling He has for you in your life?

We are not prophets today as Jeremiah was a prophet - God literally putting His words into our mouths to speak words directly from God to the nations - however, we do have the Word of God, which Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." In addition to this, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." This being the case, how are you proclaiming God's word in your life and the life of others? Are you going? Are you speaking? Are you trusting God in this?

Where have you seen God's word "pluck up and break down, destroy and overthrow, build and plant" in your own life, in your community, in your church? (vs. 10)

What is your greatest takeaway from this week's message on Jeremiah 1:1-10 and how will you put that into action in your own walk with the Lord? Who in your life can honestly help to hold you accountable to this?