



Summer Study Discussion Guide #7

Sermon Title: Disillusioned with God

Biblical Reference: Jeremiah 20:1-18

Date Preached: Sunday, July 24th, 2022 @ 11am

Summer Study Date: Wednesday, July 27th, 2022

Sermon Summary

Jeremiah 20 occurs in approximately 600 – 592 B.C. Just a few years before the Babylonish captivity that occurred in 587 B.C. This was the time Jerusalem was destroyed and the people are taken into captivity to be slaves. Jeremiah spends his ministry warning people, who would never listen or repent, and he knew what was coming.

Jeremiah suffered a breakdown and had a very dark conversation with the Lord. He accuses God of deceiving him, stating he wished he were never born. Jeremiah was angry at God and became very despondent. This was a private conversation between Jeremiah and the Lord, however, the Lord had him include it in his book though it was not flattering. This passage teaches false expectations can deceive us and make us angry with God. If we bring our expectations in line with the Bible God can continue to use us.

Quick Review

Looking back at your notes from this week's sermon, was there anything you heard for the first time or anything that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

Were you able to apply something you learned from the sermon this week?

My Story

Have you ever been through a time in your life when it seemed like everything was going wrong and the people you should have received support from made things worse?

Digging Deeper

1. Anyone Can Be Affected

Ask a volunteer to read: Jeremiah 20:14-18

14 Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

15 Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad.

16 And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide;

17 Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me.

18 Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

This is not the language of a Christian, let alone a prophet of God. The person saying these things is the prophet Jeremiah, a man so revered that Jesus was mistaken by some to be Jeremiah (Matt 16:13-14). Jeremiah was quoted by Jesus in the New Testament. Yet this man was the one who spoke these words. This shows us anyone can be affected by anger at God for our circumstances.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you believe God included these verses in the Bible?
- How should we react when we hear people say things like this?
- Why does the Lord expose the weaknesses and sins of his most prominent servants?
- What are the negative consequences of Christians projecting themselves to be free of sins and weakness?
- Give us an example of a person admitting to a weakness or a sin that encouraged others?

2. Constant Pressure Cracks the Strongest

Ask a volunteer to read:

Jeremiah 20:2 Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD.

Jeremiah 20:7 O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.

Jeremiah 20:8 For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.

Antagonism against Jeremiah's message has reached a fever pitch and for the first time Jeremiah's persecution turns physical. Even the priests, who should have been on his side, start to persecute him. Jeremiah prophesied in chapter nineteen against the sins of Israel. He condemned the child sacrifice and idolatry. He also revealed the Lord would destroy Jerusalem as a broken vessel and it could not be made whole again. This enraged Pashur who was one of the workers in the temple. He beats Jeremiah and arrests him, putting him in the stocks in a public place. It becomes too much for Jeremiah, he snaps and begins to accuse God of deceiving him.

Discussion Questions:

- As you scan through verses 7-18, how would you describe both the positive and negative responses Jeremiah had to these pressures in his life?
- Why does God allow these pressures in the life of His people?
- Contrary to the widely held belief, "God will never give you more than you can handle", He often does give us more than we can handle. Why do you think this is?

Ask a volunteer to read:

Jeremiah 20:9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

Jeremiah tried to quit but he had too much of God's Word in him to be able to quit. When he saw the situation around him, he knew God's Word was the answer and he just had to speak up. Many people have had a similar experience of trying to quit but not being able to because of something that God has done in their life that made quitting impossible.

Discussion Questions:

- Can you tell us about a time you tried to quit and why you were ultimately unsuccessful?

3. Expectations Can be Very Unhealthy

Ask a volunteer to read:

Jeremiah 20:7 O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.

Jeremiah accuses the Lord of deceiving him. This passage is about the difficulties Jeremiah experienced because his calling. With this in mind, we understand the deception he is accusing God of happened when he was called. When God called Jeremiah, He told him he was to be a prophet to the nations.

Jer 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Initially, Jeremiah refused. However, when the Lord told him he had no reason to fear because He would be with him, he surrendered.

Jer 1:6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

Jer 1:7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Jer 1:8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Jer 1:9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

Jer 1:10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Jeremiah had the expectation that the ministry would not be this troubling. A prophet to the nations should have more honor than being beaten and put in stocks. In the Lord's defense, He told Jeremiah that he would have trouble and the people would fight him.

Jer 1:19 And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Jeremiah was the one who deceived himself with his own expectations that things would be easier. Often, we do the same thing. We have expectations of life that do not always match with reality. When faced with the harsh reality of life, we can get mad at God. We can lead ourselves to think God deceived us or took advantage of us. God never promised us a life of leisure in this world. On the contrary, God said we would have tribulation in this life. The next life (in eternity) will be different.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do many Christians have an expectation of a trouble-free life?

- Give us an example of how adjusting your expectations to the Bible led to a healthier life?
- As a child of God, what are some things we can and should be expecting based upon His promises?
- Where have you seen in your life, or the lives of others, where false expectations hurt or held us back?

4. God Uses the Broken

God healed Jeremiah and continued to use him for many more years in the ministry. He was suicidal, he was angry at the Lord, and he was saying things that were not true. He tried to quit and God still healed him and used him.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do so many Christians believe God cannot use them?
- How can we help others who have been hurt or broken to heal and serve?

5. Help Comes from God

Ask a volunteer to read:

Jeremiah 20:12 But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

Jeremiah 20:13 Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers.

Here Jeremiah opens his cause to the Lord telling him about his suffering and despondency. He puts his faith and trust in the Lord and sings to God by faith trusting Him for future deliverance and justice.

Discussion Questions:

- Why are we sometimes resistant to opening our cause before the Lord?
- How does us bringing our cause or problems to the Lord help us?
- How can we follow Jeremiah's example in these verses?
- In what way can Jeremiah's story give hope to others?

Taking It Home

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they felt and what they can do because of hearing the message:

1. What point in this message was most impactful for you?
2. How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?
3. How will you put into practice what you have learned today?