

Jeremiah the Man of Sorrows

by J. Vernon McGee

Jeremiah, the Man of Sorrows, was a prophet who was chosen by God to deliver a harsh message to his people, and his sincerity and compassion are a model for us today.

Duration: 38:50

Scripture: Psalm 30:5, Jeremiah 1:6-7, Jeremiah 1:11-12, Jeremiah 14:17, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:37, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Missionary Work", "Serving God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the lack of young people preparing for the mission field and the focus on success rather than serving God. He emphasizes the need for a high sense of duty and moral fiber in today's society. The speaker refers to the biblical figure Jeremiah, who felt unequipped for the job God gave him but still carried out his mission with courage. The sermon highlights the importance of being willing to give oneself to Christ and the impact of Jeremiah's tears and emotional expression on others.

Transcript

Jeremiah, the man of sorrows, of the Old Testament. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? He was then in six months of his death upon the cross. At that time, the disciples said, Some say that you are John the Baptist.

And that's easily understood, for John had been his forerunner, had announced him, and had been brutally and cruelly put to death. The second one they mentioned was Elijah. And that can be understood because Elijah had made an indelible impression upon this nation, and God had promised to send him, Elijah, before that great and notable day of the Lord.

But the third one is the one that interests me, and the only other mentioned by name. Some say that you are Jeremiah. Why Jeremiah? Why not Isaiah? Why not one of the other prophets, Ezekiel? My beloved, the reason they thought he was Jeremiah was because he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And at that time, even then, he had not yet stood at the tomb of Lazarus, where it said, Jesus wept. He'd not yet stood over the city of Jerusalem, weeping over that great city. But even before then, they thought he was Jeremiah because of his tears.

For Jeremiah stood over Jerusalem weeping, and candidly, with no reflection upon him, that's all he ever did, was weep. He began his ministry during the reign of Josiah. Josiah is the last king that was a good king.

The last revival that the nation experienced was coming to an end during the reign of Josiah when this man Jeremiah began his ministry. He saw the handwriting on the wall, and he spoke out. And so he prophesied during the reign then of the last four kings.

Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. And these men were not king-sized kings either. They were all peewee potentains, little people, not a God's man in the lot of them.

And so Jeremiah had the unhappy lot of being a prophet when the sun went down for the nation. He never deterred the downward course of the nation. I don't think God asked him to.

This is what God said to him. In Jeremiah 15, 1, Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people. Cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.

Though Moses wouldn't have done any better. God said he wouldn't. Moses led them out of the land of Egypt, and Moses brought them to the edge of the promised land, but now even Moses couldn't help them.

Samuel is the man who poured the anointing oil on both of their kings, who interceded for them. He's the one that started the Davidic line. And God says even if Samuel was here, I wouldn't listen.

Too late, you passed the place of no return. The nation is now going into captivity. And so this man Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem.

He saw it burned to the ground, and there was no fire department there to put it out. He sat down in its warm ashes, and hot tears coursed down his cheeks as he saw that nation, that nation go away into captivity. May I say it was a dark day.

It was a tragic day. And will you listen to him? Here's what he said. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

No man ever sobbed as he did until Jesus came to this earth. I want us to pour his tears into a test tube. I want us to make a test of them, not to see how much of NaCl there is in the tears, but I want us to see something else that's very important about those tears.

And we'd like to speak first about the sincerity of the sorrow of Jeremiah. Then we'd like to speak on the significance of the sorrow of Jeremiah. And then third and last, the solution to the sorrow of Jeremiah.

If I could write just one word over the sincerity of this man's sorrow, I would write the word solitude. His sobbing was a solo. He was the lonely prophet.

He stood alone. No one stood with him. He's been called the prophet of the broken heart.

He's the prophet of pathos and of pity. My friend, tears will not assist you in any popularity contest. A sob sister never attracts friends.

I've never read the book, *How to Make Friends and Influence People*, but I have a notion there's no chapter in there on about weeping as part of the way you do it. It was Ella Wheeler Wilcox that gave us this little tidbit of doggerel. Life in the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone.

For the sad old earth must fodder its mirth, but it has trouble enough of its own. Tears are generally conceded to be a sign of weakness. Crying today is effeminate.

Bawling is for babies. I remember when I was pastor out here in Pasadena, there was a little boy that brought his little sister to the summer Bible school. He was just a little fella in the beginner's department.

She hadn't even started. She was a little bitty type. I heard an awful crying between the breezeway, between my study and the building next door.

I opened the window and looked out and she had fallen down. He was there giving her a sales talk about not crying. He was mothering his little sister.

He told her about everything and finally he concluded it with this punchline. He says, Only women cry. I don't know what he thought she was, but that's what he said to her.

Only women cry. It had its effect on her. She apparently didn't want to be a woman because she immediately stopped her sobbing and he wiped away her tears and they went on.

She was weeping. Women cry. I think the little fella was right to a certain extent.

Well Jeremiah cried and Jeremiah had a woman's heart. He was sensitive. He was sincere.

He was sympathetic. He was as tender as a mother. I want to know that man someday and we will get to know him in heaven.

Oh how sensitive he was. And this man was chosen of God to deliver the harshest message that you find in the Bible. There's nothing to correspond to it.

I tell you friends, this man had an awful burden. He announced the destruction of Jerusalem and he loved that city. It was his city, his people.

He pronounced judgment upon his nation. He loved his nation and he counseled them to surrender to the enemy, making himself a traitor. What person today would you choose to deliver a harsh message? I don't know about you, but if I had a rough, brutal message to give, I'd get the toughest hombre that I could find.

And I'd say to him, I want you to go give the tough message, because I'm afraid the other fella wouldn't give it. Be nice if we had Attila the Hun to give the message. He was a rough one.

Or you might get Bismarck. Bismarck never hesitated saying what was on his mind. Mr. Gromyko would make a very good man to give a tough message.

And John L. Lewis could deliver a tough message. I'll say this, I would not want to send Mr. Caspar Milos to give a harsh message. But my beloved, that man, God chose to give his message.

God couldn't have any other kind of man to do it. You see, the man God sent to give a harsh message, telling his own people there to go into captivity, must be a man that his heart will be broken so he can reveal God. He can reveal the one who would be coming a few centuries later, who again would stand

over that city and weep because it was to be destroyed.

It had to be a man with a tender heart. That's the only kind of man that could. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan said that he once heard Dr. Dale of Birmingham, England say, he says, the only man that I have ever felt that ought to preach on the subject of hell is Dwight L. Moody.

And the reason for that, where he was asked the question, he says because he always preaches it with tears in his voice. My beloved, before we give a harsh message from God, we better be sure we're in step with him. How we can learn from Jeremiah? God took a tender, hearted man, a man that had a woman's heart, a mother's heart, to give the harshest message that's in the entire word of God.

Now I've said that Jeremiah had a woman's heart, and I hope you won't misunderstand me. I do not mean he was a weak man, for he was not. There is a strength in Jeremiah which I personally miss in Elijah.

Oh, somebody says, but Jeremiah never went to the top of Mount Carmel and in a dramatic fashion withstood the nation. That's true. But he never did crawl under a juniper tree and want to die.

Here's a man who stood alone. There are not 5,000 or 7,000 hiding up in the bushes either on his side. He's alone.

He's absolutely alone. And I never find this man showing a yellow streak, although we will see in a moment he wanted to resign. He stood at the forge of life doing the will of God.

He didn't lack courage, but this man never did feel equipped for the job. At the very beginning he said, oh Lord, I'm a child. Don't send me out to do a man's work when I'm only a child.

I'm a boy. But you know, sometimes God sends a boy to do a man's job so that the world will know that it's God that's doing it. And this man, he couldn't stand the strain he felt.

The call of God to him meant a heartbreak. I want you to listen to him. In the 14th chapter of Jeremiah, the 17th verse, he says, therefore thou shalt say this word unto them, let mine eyes run down with tears night and day.

Let them not cease for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach with a very grievous blow. He's nothing but a cry baby. He says, night and day, the message I had to give, I did it with tears streaming down my eyes.

And it was taking too much out of me. I couldn't stand that strain. The days were dark.

They were extremely dark days. He was drained of his emotion. He withdrew in dread and horror.

He never made a convert. Everything he ever said was rejected. He was persecuted to his dying day.

You want to know how dark the days were? In the ninth chapter of Jeremiah, it says, oh, that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men that I might leave my people and go from them, for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And so this man under the pressure, the stress, and the strain, he turned in his resignation.

You want to hear him? He went to God. And he says, if you don't mind, I want you to get another boy, not me. I can't do it.

I can't continue. Listen to him. In the twentieth chapter of the ninth verse, he said, Then I said, I'll not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name, for 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 said, I went to the Lord, and I said, Lord, here's my resignation. You will have to get someone who's not moved by this message. You will have to get someone, maybe from the outside, that won't be disturbed by this message.

I want to resign. And God says, all right, go ahead and resign. And he resigned.

And then Jeremiah says, the call of God was upon me. His word was like a fire shut up in my bones. I couldn't keep quiet.

I went back, and I said, Lord, I'll go give the message. You call me. I'll go give the message, though it kill me.

And it did. Though it kill me, I'll give your message. And you know, that was the joy that he had, in fact, the only joy he did have.

Listen to him. Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart, for I'm called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts. This is a day of specialization that we live in.

Men today are trained for jobs. This is a day of vocational guidance. This is a day when young people are tested for their aptitude.

This is a day when we have career diplomats. This is a day when you have to have the exact man for the exact job. Gotta have him.

I went through the clinic at Dallas. My, these doctors pass you from one to the other. This doctor, he examines you here, and you say, well, doctor, my head's been bothering you.

I can't do that. I'll send you to another one. We have the head man down farther.

I went from one to another. I went through about six of them. My beloved, we're living in a day when there's no attention paid to moral fiber.

There's nothing given to young people today about a high sense of duty. Our boys and girls today are the victims of a short-sighted educational system. Will you listen to this choice tidbit out of the Reader's Digest some time ago? It was a question and answer article.

How can you increase your chances for success? And that's the only thing that mounts anything today in America, is are you a success? And that, of course, success is spelt with a dollar mark instead of an S. By engaging in work you most enjoy doing and which gives fullest expression to your abilities and personality, it may take some experimenting to find the right vocation, but it's worth the effort. That is, if the effort's not too great. This is the day when it's got to be nice and easy.

Too bad Jeremiah didn't know about these things. He was not equipped for the job that was given to him. And we have now come to the place, there's not much being said, but some of us are going to start talking.

Did you know that there are very few young people today preparing for the mission field? Very few. You'd be amazed if you knew how few. That's the head of our mission boards, how many they're getting.

They're all preparing to be a success. Not for the mission field. And that's in Christian education today, don't you forget it.

Men today are looking for a job where you punch a clock. At four o'clock you go home, you turn on the TV and you forget it all. You don't take your job with you.

And all the way through you hold your feelings and emotions in check. We don't dare reveal them today. My friend, we need today young people, boys and girls, men and women, who will invest their lives for God and forget to count the cost.

We need today Christians who are willing to spend and be spent. It's hard to get anyone to do Christian work today that won't watch the clock. The whistle just blew, we gotta go home.

We need today those who are willing to bankrupt their feelings, who are to be prodigal of all their strength, that are willing to be poured out like water to lose themselves. Somebody said to me the other day about a fine young preacher that I know, he's really God's man, said he's had a nervous breakdown. I said, thank the Lord.

And they said, what do you mean, thank the Lord? He's had a nervous breakdown. I said, thank the Lord. Most preachers that I know are gonna live to a ripe old age.

Most Christians I know are gonna live to a ripe old age. Oh, my beloved, this is the hour when we need men and women that are just willing to give themselves to Christ. I love Jeremiah.

I don't like his crying. I get so tired of that man crying when I read the book. I say, for goodness sake, Jeremiah, turn it off and let's talk a little.

But here he goes again. He says, I'm weeping, I'm being poured out. The thing was, he was.

David Garrick, the great Shakespearean actor of England, tells a story. He says, one day I was walking down the streets in London. I came to a crowd and there was a man speaking.

He says, I never heard a man speak as that man spoke. He says, I felt myself irresistibly drawn and the first thing I knew, I'd worked my way into the crowd and I stood right beneath him. And he says, down the cheeks of that man great tears were flowing.

And he said, when he finished, a little old woman in front of him reached up a withered and bony finger and put it under his nose and said to him, I have followed you since seven o'clock this morning when you preached your first sermon. I've heard you preach on the streets of London five times today. Why do you weep? That man was George Whitefield.

George Whitefield was awfully cross-eyed, incurably cross-eyed. This man was burlesque on every stage. This man was ridiculed by everyone.

This man was held up in every pulpit in England and made fun of. Every bar room had a joke about George Whitefield and they accused him of everything. Accused him even of immorality and that man was as pure as an angel.

This is the man that could preach five times in one day and this woman said, you have wet me five times with your tears. David Garrick said, I listened to him. He said, I've never heard anybody speak as he spoke.

He said that when he said that man would die unless they came to Christ, he says, I knew it was true because George Whitefield meant every word he said. Tears streamed down his eyes. I knew I was lost without Christ.

Then he said he got to the end of his message. He said he had nothing else to say. He couldn't say anything else and says all he did was just lift those great arms and he said, oh, oh.

He says the Holy Ghost bent that crowd just like a field of corn is bent by the wind. They went down. David Garrick said, I would give my handful of sovereign if I could just say, oh, like George Whitefield said, oh.

He said, if I could say, oh, like George Whitefield said, oh, I'd be the greatest actor the world has ever seen. But he says when George Whitefield said it, he wasn't acting. He was sincere.

Came from God. Oh, we don't need more preaching today. We need the right kind of preaching.

I don't think we need more fundamental preaching. We need preaching today that gets into the heart of the man who's giving. Jeremiah was a man of the broken heart.

My friend today, I want to speak in all kindness, but there are some of you that have listened to all the great preachers of this century. You started out here with Dr. Tarry. You've heard them all.

And you will leave here today dry eyed. You've been leaving all these years dry eyed. May I say to you today, God have mercy on your soul.

Not to be moved by the word of God. The sincerity of the sorrow of Jeremiah. Briefly, will you notice the significance of the sorrow of this man? And I turn back to the first chapter of Jeremiah, where we must pick up in the first chapter.

Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the Lord unto me, thou hast well seen, for I will hasten my word to perform it. That's the first thing that he saw that was his call.

Now the almond tree, the almond rods, called the waker in that land. It's the alarm clock, if you please. And no alarm clock is popular, especially in the morning.

And this man, Jeremiah, was the alarm clock in the morning. I'm going to make you a rod of an almond tree, God said. I'm going to make you wake people up, and they won't like you for that.

They don't want to be waked up, but I'm going to make you to wake them up. Then he said to them something else. The word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, what seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot, and the face thereof is toward the north.

A seething pot, that seething cauldron. What did it mean? It meant simply this. Those were disturbed days.

Shakespeare, who was a student of the Bible, opens the book of Macbeth, that is his play on Macbeth, with witches around a cauldron stirring it up. You know what he's doing, all he's doing? He's a great writer. He's giving you an atmosphere that those were days of tension.

God said to Jeremiah, Jeremiah, the days in which your lot is cast are not easy days. You're going through a time of spiritual metabolism. This man predicted the destruction of Jerusalem.

Listen to him. Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth. Jeremiah 26, 6. Then God said to him, it shall come to pass that the nation and kingdom which shall not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, with the famine, with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

God said, these are troublous times, Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar's coming down from the north. It's like a seething cauldron.

I want you to stand before your people and tell them to surrender. Because the times of the Gentiles has already begun, and I have now taken the scepter that I put in the hands of David and his line, I'm taking it now and I'll put it into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, and it'll stay there until nail-pierced hands take it. You tell them that they're to surrender.

I'm through. Now that message broke his heart. His eyes were wet with tears.

He has a broken and bleeding heart. I see him alone. I see him in solitude.

I see him forsaken, and he's longing for a sympathy, for that's what I'd write over the significance of the sword of Jeremiah. I'd write one word, sympathy. He never got it.

No one ever came to him and said to him, Jeremiah, I agree with you. No one ever came to him and put the arm around his back and said, I'm for you. And so this man had to say, is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, see if there's any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

He reminds me of another, a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief, who came to this earth who found no sympathy. Why did he have to take the pathway that he took, even the Lord Jesus? The same reason Jeremiah did, because of sin. The difference is, Jeremiah was involved in the sin of his own people.

Our Lord was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, but he was taking upon himself the sins of others. When he did, there must be a judgment of sin, and Jerusalem stands over yonder. Twenty-seven times that city's been destroyed.

Twenty-seven times the judgment of God fell upon it. Why? Because God will judge sin even of his own people. And when our Lord was made sin for us, judgment fell upon him, and he became the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

He had none of his own. It was for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, but he took your sin and he took my sin. And in conclusion, will you look at the solution to the sorrow of Jeremiah? There must be healing.

There must be cure. There must be, if you please, there must be a balm in Gilead for this man. There I see Jeremiah standing, head covered with gloom, the smoking embers of that city casting a smoke about him and clothing him.

There's a tinge of tragedy. There's a taste of failure. There's a touch of defeat in this man, but wait just a minute.

We're not through. We're not through, my beloved. This man was able to say this.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise under David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days, Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely. And this is his name whereby he shall be called the Lord our righteousness.

Then I go to the last book of the Bible, and I find out there's a solution to this sorrow, for I read, God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

One of these days the sob of this earth will be hushed on the bosom of God. One of these days the weeping of this world will stop. He says weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

And the reason is that 1,900 years ago he put up a cross. He bore our sorrows. He carried our grief.

And we saw in the 8th chapter of Romans, 37th verse, Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved. And don't think for one moment that this is the sloppy love that the liberal talks about today. God loves you.

Does he? I want to say to you, you go to the hospitals today, you go around to the cemeteries today, you go around today on Skid Row, you go into the homes with the broken hearts. I say to you, where's the love of God today? The language here is interesting. He loved us.

That's Aris Pence. That points back to one place in the past. The only place, my friend, today where you will find the love of God is at the cross of Christ.

That's where he loved you. That's where he loved you. You can't begin with him until the sin question is settled.

For the teardrop, broken heart, sorrow, all the result of sin, the sin question must be settled. He settled it at the cross. And there, love of God is displayed.

May we are more than come through him who loved us, loved us when he gave his son to die for us on the cross. Oh, my friend, today, do you have a sorrow? Do you have a broken heart today? Do you have unfulfilled desires and hopes that have been crashed to the earth? Bring them to the foot of the cross. Bring them to Jesus.

1900 years ago, he bore your sin. Have you been to Calvary? Have you been to Calvary? A man on the street in London years ago said, I've never been to college, but I've been to Calvary. Have you been to Calvary? You can go to all the colleges in the world.

It won't do you a bit of good until you've been to Calvary. Well, it speaks of him and his death, if you please. That's the focal point where he revealed his love for you.

In this world today with all of its sadness, all of its sorrow, are you finding the burden too hard in the heat of the day? Oh, bring it to him. Bring it to him.

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