

# The Voice of Jeremiah (Continued) I

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*God is in quest of a man who seeks the truth and has spiritual and moral values, and He values truth, faithfulness, and loyalty above all else.*

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 5:1

**Topics:** "Godly Character", "Spiritual Courage"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks preaches about the quest for a man according to God's heart, emphasizing the importance of seeking truth and embodying spiritual and moral values. He highlights the significance of speaking and living in truth, as well as the courage and faithfulness required to stand against falsehood and uphold God's standards, even when unpopular or challenging.

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## Transcript

"They knew not... the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath" (Acts 13:27).

The Quest For A Man

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man... that seeketh the truth" (Jeremiah 5:1).

There are two preliminary words necessary to a consideration of this so terrible implication. One is that it can hardly be taken in its utter and final suggestion. It seems to imply that there was no such single man in Jerusalem. But we do know that Jeremiah was not absolutely alone in his quest for truth. There were, at least, a few who remained true in heart and desire, although the landslide to declension was so great. The other thing is that, appropriate as the challenge to our own time may be, we are not suggesting that there is in our day such a general state of positive rejection of, and rebellion against God and alliance with heathen gods as was the case amongst God's people in Jeremiah's time.

Having said that, we still feel that there is the occasion and the need for this part of the 'Voice' to be heeded. It is the quest for a man, and the emphasis has to be put on "a man". God is revealed to us in the Bible as ever and always being in quest of a man. In creation and throughout history the Bible shows how God's heart is set upon a man after His heart. One question raised by the Psalmist spans the ages - "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:4).

With Jeremiah this quest becomes a challenge. It is the challenge as to where there is manhood according to God's mind. It may be that there are exceedingly few who could answer that challenge utterly, but there are certain features which with God weigh heavily in constituting the man of His quest. Not all of the things which the world regard as making a man to be admired describe the man that God so characterizes. When Pilate brought forth Jesus and cried "Behold the man", there was everything present with Jesus as to His position, His success, His associates, His physique, His apparent impotence, His inability to "save Himself", His prospects, etc., which put Him at an utter discount with the world and men. Paul was right when he said: "Unto the Jews a scandal, and unto Greeks foolishness." The world, and worldly-mindedness, demand for the ideal man success, prestige, means, reputation, and natural ability of one kind or another, such as social, physical, intellectual. Without these as obvious things the man is "despised and rejected of men".

Over against the world's estimate and standard stands God's assessment of a man's values. What was it that Jeremiah challenged his hearers to find? Look at the description and you look straight into the eyes of God. There you will see that with God the features which characterize the man of God's quest are spiritual and moral values.

One word or virtue covers a very great range. It is the word "Truth". Truth is elemental. That is, it is not manufactured or compounded. It is of first principles and in the very nature. What is made can be unmade. Truth is an essence. It is fundamental and indestructible. If anything can be destroyed, annihilated and brought to an end, it is not true. Truth is eternal. God will not countenance or commit Himself to anything that will ultimately be exposed to be a lie. Truth is a spiritual element.

There is the profoundest reason why God is so intensely jealous in His regard for truth. The entire history of the wreck and ruin, the sin and all its consequences in this world, is due to an initial and fundamental lie. It was a lie about God. It was a lie about man. It was a lie about human destiny. The lie was a deception, a misrepresentation, a trick and snare, a distortion, an invention and fabrication, a perversion, a myth, a subterfuge, a disguise, a counterfeit; it was hypocrisy and pretence. It was in nature a 'snake in the grass', a 'wolf in sheep's clothing', a Satan 'as an angel of light'. Like the venom of the serpent's bite, it has entered the very blood of humanity and it has impregnated the very constitution of the world's system. Its beginning appeared simple but its end will be so complex, so unmitigated and blatant that men will "believe a lie instead of the truth" because thereby they more easily obtain their object. We are now living in the time when systems and ideologies reign which have repudiated the existence of such a thing as truth, and the idea of it is ridiculed or fought. Hence the world and society are disintegrating. There is no security or assurance anywhere.

No wonder that God hates every semblance of untruth, and that His hatred thereof was so fiercely demonstrated against the hypocrites, the pretenders of His time.

Thus it is that God puts such high value upon a man who "speaks the truth to his own hurt"; a man who not only speaks true things but is true. Truth is something of "the inward parts". The framework, the instrumentalities, the means employed and blessed by God may pass away, but the inward spiritual value which is God Himself will abide for ever and never be destroyed.

Of all that may be said about the Prophets it is this "Voice" that is the loudest and most challenging. They stood solidly against all forms of falsehood, and when Satan sought to discredit them by means of "False Prophets" they withstood them and eventually God vindicated the true.

We must abide in the truth, for Satan's downfall and all its devastating results are attributed to his not "abiding in the truth".

Hand-in-hand with the stand for truth is another virtue upon which God places very much value. The Bible makes so much of this in relation to the Man of God. This is more than the voice of words from the Prophets, it is characteristic of the Prophets themselves. I refer to spiritual courage.

This, as we know, was a very real feature of Christ, and it was one of the evident fruits of the Holy Spirit in the Apostles and others on, and after, the Day of Pentecost. We repeat: the Prophets were outstanding in the matter. As with truth, so with courage, a very great deal of ground is covered by it. A great modern soldier has ranked courage as supreme among the virtues. If we really analysed and defined courage and noted all its aspects we would go a long way toward agreeing with that estimate.

There are other words and other ways of saying the same thing. For instance, there is no word in this category that shows God's estimate of this value more than the word faithfulness. Faithfulness is the very essence and embodiment of courage. God has linked the crown of life with that.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Faithful to God. Faithful to the truth. Faithful to what God has shown. Faithful to our trust. Faithful to our brother. A word which carries the same meaning and may bring us closer to the practical aspect is the word loyalty. It takes courage to be loyal. The opposite is cowardice, compromise, policy, diplomacy; and anything that sacrifices principle for personal gain, advantage, convenience. Disloyalty is a most contemptible feature.

It costs to be loyal, courageous, and faithful, and it sometimes means that it puts our popularity and acceptance in jeopardy. To sponsor an unpopular but valuable cause, ministry, and instrument of the Lord may cause real hesitation if policy and personal advantage have weight with us. Paul said to Timothy: "Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." It may have been costly in those times to stand with the testimony of Jesus, but it went right to the soul to show allegiance with that man of world-wide ostracism and now in prison. It was a great triumph in a young man that he stuck loyally to Paul to the end. He has ever since shared Paul's vindication.

We now laud the Prophets and Apostles and Martyrs, but we must remember that in their time they were the sponsors of the most unpopular, and - apparently - the most forlorn causes, and they had to show a supreme courage in great aloneness and dislike.

Look and listen again to them and their "Voice" as the embodiment of courage in the presence of every conceivable aspect of 'conformity to the death of Jesus'.

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