

GOD'S ANSWERS TO JEREMIAH'S RESERVATIONS

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INTRODUCTION:

A. Throughout the Bible there have been some very special occasions where God has appeared to people with a particular mission or purpose for them to fulfill:

1. In each of these occasions, the men and women had a choice to make: Would they give themselves over to the purpose of God or would they reject the Lord's plan for them?
2. Consider some cases in particular: Noah responded by doing all that God commanded him; Abraham responded by leaving his homeland and journeying to a place God would later show him; Moses initially responded by making excuses but eventually submitted to leading God's people out of Egypt; Isaiah responded by saying, "Here am I, send me"
3. In every one of these cases there were great challenges and consequences to doing the will of the Lord, but in each case the men ultimately responded by faith & did great things for the Lord!
4. Question: How would you have responded in any one of those cases?

B. There's another man who responded to God's commission by faith – That man's name was Jeremiah

1. He is a man we can relate to because we see that at first Jeremiah had some reservations about being God's man for the job... He ultimately shows great faith, but has some concerns first
2. His reservations are some of the same ones we have in carrying out God's will in our own lives
3. With each reservation, we also can see the wonderful way God reassures Jeremiah, instilling great courage & confidence in him. We need to see the same assurances are available to us today!

LESSONS FROM JEREMIAH'S RESERVATIONS AND GOD'S ANSWERS

A. The first reservation answered is a lack confidence in being able to fulfill God's purpose:

1. When God first comes to Jeremiah, God brings Jeremiah words of assurance. It seems God anticipated that Jeremiah would have some reservations about his own ability (**Jeremiah 1:4-5**)
 - a. Jeremiah doesn't say, "I don't think I am the man for the job" but that thought surely ran through his mind. Jeremiah certainly knew of people he thought were more qualified, stronger, wiser, more experienced, & more talented – But God chose him!
 - b. Jeremiah may have been apprehensive, but God was confident he was the man for the job
 - c. Why is God confident in Jeremiah's abilities? Because God knows Jeremiah better than Jeremiah knew himself! God created Jeremiah, God formed him in the womb, and so God knows what Jeremiah is capable of and what really is beyond his abilities
 - d. Not only did God create Jeremiah, but God set him apart before his birth for this very purpose... You could say he was specifically designed with God's purpose in mind!
2. This is one of those passages you can turn to in showing that abortion is wrong. Jeremiah was Jeremiah before he was born. This shows life begins before birth... it's a life in the womb!
3. God's reassurance to Jeremiah reminds us of an important truth – God does not take us down a path in life or down a path of service to Him that's beyond our ability (**Dt 10:12-14; 1 Pt 5:9-10**)
 - a. We are to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. This is a high calling, but is also based on ability. It's not based on what others are able to do, but what I can do
 - b. In regards to trials it has been said God keeps his eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat... God knows just how much we can take and just how long we can take it
 - c. God's commands are not beyond our reach – Sometimes we feel like living like a Christian is just too difficult, but God created us and does not expect us to be something we are not able to be... Holiness and sanctification are possible if we desire it enough!
4. Also, we see this with regards to temptation. God will not allow us to face temptations that are beyond our ability to bear (**1 Corinthians 10:13**)
 - a. As we studied about recently, sometimes we want to blame God when we fall to sin; however it's far from God's fault. He has actively put road blocks there to prevent it
 - b. One road block is that there is a sense in which before temptation comes to us, it first has to pass God's clearinghouse... He will not let it come unless we can overcome it!

B. The second reservation answered takes the form being at the wrong place in life to do God's purpose:

1. When Jeremiah hears the call of God, he responds saying, "I am only a youth" (**Jeremiah 1:6**)
 - a. You could argue that God's purpose was a BIG mission for a BIG person... This would be a daunting task for an older person, much less a younger person! (**Jeremiah 1:10**)
 - b. **Illustration:** After first day as "the preacher" at the _____ church telling the men, "You guys don't need me, you need a Sewell Hall or a Paul Earnhart. I don't have either the wisdom or the experience to fix the problems you have, you need someone else"
 - c. How old was Jeremiah? Many believe he was in his teens, some believe he was as old as his early twenties. Either way this was a great deal of responsibility for a young man!
2. God's response was simple: Jeremiah did not need to worry about his age, because he would be going to whomever God chose to send him (**Jeremiah 1:7**)
 - a. Age did not matter in Jeremiah's case because his message would be an ageless message... He would be a prophet for all of God's people whether they be young or old!
 - b. A prophet's age did not change the message he preached. Whether the message of God came from an aged Elisha or a young Jeremiah, the message was whatever God said!
 - c. Throughout the rest of this chapter and book the tone is not that of God talking to a child but to a man. Jeremiah saw his usefulness to God's purpose as being limited by being "too young" but God saw his potential and knew he was the man for the job
3. Whether we are old or young, God has a purpose for our life and His message is one that is ageless in nature (**Ecc 12:1; Titus 2:1-6**)
4. Our physical circumstances may present limitations, but we cannot allow our physical limitations to overcome our personal spiritual growth or our service to God (**2 Cor 4:16-18**)

C. The third reservation answered is that of not knowing how to speak God's purpose:

1. Along with his reservation about being too young, Jeremiah's initial response was that of not knowing how to speak – An important thing for a prophet of God! (**Jeremiah 1:6**)
 - a. Perhaps Jeremiah was concerned about what to say or perhaps how he could say it
 - b. Jeremiah would have known that the prophets of Israel were national preachers... What they said was the most important message. The future nation's future depended on their faithfulness & how the people responded to their preaching. That's pressure!
 - c. This is similar to Amos – He stood before Amaziah, the priest, and boldly the message of God boldly... and yet he was "no prophet nor the son of a prophet" (**Amos 7:12-16**)
2. God's answer to Jeremiah was reassuring: You will speak whatever I command you! (**Jer. 1:7**)
 - a. The power of the message did not reside in Jeremiah's eloquence and his oratory skills... The power of the message was in the fact that it was God's message.
 - b. In this way, the messenger was quite insignificant → Sure, Jeremiah had to say what the Lord told him to say and he needed to do it courageously, but it wasn't about him!
 - c. This had to be reassuring to Jeremiah – He didn't have to figure out what best to say to motivate the people to repent, He didn't have to figure out what words to use to help turn people's hearts back to God... His message came from the Lord!
 - d. It also had to be reassuring when he would have to bring a difficult message – When he had to speak the tough words of condemnation, judgment, and destruction, it was God's message not his own. It wasn't Jeremiah condemning them, it was God!
3. This is reminiscent of one of the excuses of Moses as he said, "I am not eloquent" (**Exo 4:10-12**)
 - a. Notice Moses' emphasis – "I am not eloquent, either in the past or since You have spoken to your servant" – He never was eloquent and when God chose to start speaking to him, God didn't miraculously change that fact. He's never been a good speaker!
 - b. God says, "Don't you know that I knew that already?" – God tells Moses that God created Moses the way he was. If Moses couldn't do it, God wouldn't have asked him to!
 - c. God reassures Moses two things: (1) I will go with you (2) I will give you the words you need. Isn't this just like what God told Jeremiah? Yet Moses still needed more

- d. When Moses still makes an excuse God becomes angry with Him. But you also see God's patience in that He allows for Aaron to go with Moses and be his spokesman
 - 4. Sometimes we have reservations when it comes to teaching God's will or the gospel of Christ to others, yet we find reassurance when we realize it's God's message we are bringing!
 - a. Because it is God's message, the power does not depend on our ability to speak or our ability to present it... The power is in simply telling people God's word! **(1 Cor 2:1-5)**
 - b. Because it is God's message, it is not our place to change it **(1 Pet 4:11)** – We cannot give hope where God has not given hope & we can't water down its message. Sometimes it will difficult to deliver or difficult for people to accept, but it is still God's message!
 - c. Because it is God's message, we do not have figure out the best path to salvation, the best way to organize the church, or the best way for us to live! **(1 Cor 2:6-7)**
- **Illustration:** Person asks me, "What about this marriage situation?"

D. The final reservation God answers has do with lacking the courage to carry out God's purpose:

- 1. While Jeremiah does not say anything about being afraid, it is apparent that He was and so the Lord deals with that reservation last **(Jeremiah 1:8)**
 - a. Perhaps this was the motivating factor behind all of Jeremiah's reservations – Fear! Being afraid of not being good enough, afraid of the task, afraid of the people's response
 - b. The Lord knows the resistance Jeremiah is going to face from the people and He doesn't water that down. Many men would give up or concede to the will of the people in the face of such opposition! Great courage was going to be a necessity! **(Jer. 1:17)**
 - c. How did God reassure Jeremiah? The Lord promised to be with Jeremiah and to deliver him. He promised that his enemies would not triumph over him **(vs. 18-19)**
- 2. When God commissioned Joshua to lead Israel, He spoke to him about the necessity of being strong and courageous **(Joshua 1:5-9)**
- 3. The very same assurance that was given to Jeremiah and was given to Joshua, is given to all Christians today → The Lord God will be with us and works for us! **(Rom 8:31, 37-39; Php 4:9)**
 - a. I am sure we all have known the pain of being let down by someone we put our confidence in... It hurts and makes it hard to trust anyone again... But God will never let us down!
 - b. The same God who was with the Israelites to give them victory over the fortified Jericho, the same God who was with Gideon when his 300 men overcame the mighty Midianites, the same God who was with the little boy David when he slew the giant Goliath is with us today as we face our struggles, our battles, and our enemies!
 - c. Whether it is in facing a difficult temptation, taking a stand for the truth when we know there will be tough consequences, or continuing to do right in an environment that is against our faith, we must remember that this God is with us wherever we go!
- 4. It takes faith on our part to trust in the Lord and walk by courage and not by fear! **(Heb 13:5-6)**

ILLUS: A young boy came upon an old man who was fishing in the Mississippi River. Immediately the boy started talking the man's ear off. With patience the old man answered each question. Suddenly their conversation was interrupted by the whistle of the River Queen boat paddling down river. -The sight of the ship caused the surprised spectators to stare in awe and appreciation. Then above the

noise of the paddle wheel was heard a small boy's voice calling across the water; 'Let me ride! Let me ride!' The old man turned to the boy and tried to calm him down explaining that the River Queen was too important a ship to stop and give rides to little boys.

-But the boy kept on yelling out, 'Let me ride!' The man was stunned as the great ship pulled up and a gangplank was lowered. In a flash the boy ran onto the deck. The ship with its new cargo safely on board began to pull back into the main stream. The old man continued to stare after the ship looking for the boy

-A few minutes later the boy appeared above the rail. The boy yelled out, "Mister, I knew this ship would stop for me. The captain knows me. He's my father!"

-God doesn't forget His children.

There Will Always Be Excuses And There Will Always Be Reservations...

The young person may say, "I have my whole life ahead of me... Religion is for people who are older... I am supposed to be sowing my wild oats... Once I get my life a little more figured out, then I will consider serving God... I've got school, work, & friends so I really just don't have the time right now"

The young person with their own family may say, "I just have gotten married... I am so busy right now with work and spending time with my spouse... I've got too many concerns to take care of... We've just started having children and when they get a little older then we will start serving God"

The middle age person may say, "My family is so demanding of my time right now... I'm having to work extra hours just to make ends meet... I too have too many concerns buying for my attention and devotion... I'm doing good just to keep my kids out of trouble and through high school and college... Once I get to retirement, then I will consider being more devoted to God"

The older person may say, "Whew... now I am able to breathe a little bit, but wait, the majority of my life is behind me... Now, well, you know what they say, it's hard to teach old dogs new tricks... I'd like to be more involved in the Lord's service but I just don't seem to have the energy anymore... It really just seems too late for me to start serving God, I just don't have anything to offer any more."