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EDINBURGH

Living in God's Sovereignty

If anyone wants to get an overview of the book of Jeremiah, Bible Project's introduction video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSK36cHbrk0>) is, as usual, very helpful.

Read Jeremiah 1:1-19 (Luke's preach focused on the opening encounter with God, verses 1-10, and the conclusion in verses 18-19.)

Christians are those who follow Jesus and seek His Kingdom, and that often means living radically differently from the world around us. We should always have a sense of things not being as they should be, even when life is "normal". The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah is a powerful example to us of what this looks like, which is why we're doing this preaching series based on the book in the Bible about and by him.

Jeremiah's story begins with God demonstrating His sovereignty: that He has all knowledge (omniscience) and all power (omnipotence). He told Jeremiah that He was not only aware of him before he was born but that he had made plans for Jeremiah to fulfil. He transformed a timid young man into a courageous prophet who obeyed Him and defied His enemies for over 40 years.

Here are three ways we should respond to God's sovereignty...

1. Confidence

The root of Jeremiah confidence was that His calling was not his idea, it was God's (1:5). This isn't just for special cases like Jeremiah (Psalm 139:13, 16, Ephesians 1:4-5). Our lives are not dependent on us, our stories are not autobiographies, our confidence should not be in ourselves but in God.

We can be confident in God because of what He has shown us about Himself through the things He has done. He promised to deliver Jeremiah (1:8, 19), which was the same word He used to describe what He would do for them when they were slaves in

Egypt (Exodus 6:6). If you've put your trust in Jesus, you have experienced an even greater deliverance – Jesus's rescue of you from Sin and Death. If He has done that for you, what can't He do?

God's sovereignty makes our inadequacy irrelevant. Jeremiah wasn't supposed to come up with some clever things to say (1:9) and he wasn't to trust in his own strength (1:18). Of course, living this way is still difficult, we face the uncertainties that comes with a life of faith and learn to trust God before we see the result.

2. Clarity

At times like these, it's easy to lose focus – but actually this is always a risk. God called Jeremiah to something very specific (1:5) and because he said "Yes" to God, he had to say "No" to lots of other requests and ideas. There are many things that Christians and churches can and should do but God doesn't call us to do everything. Rather, He calls us to do particular things which He then brings together in His Kingdom: each of us has a unique contribution to make (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

I believe that this is a moment when God is going to give gifts of faith, gifts of clarity for what He particularly wants you to do. This may be a reminder to you of something He's said before, or a new revelation for a new chapter.

3. Commitment

Jeremiah's calling was hard and lasted a very long time. We want to be called to things that we like but Jesus told us to take up a cross – a form of gruesome death. But He promised that if we did so, we would find our life (Matthew 16:24-15). We could call this Christian realism, and see it in Jeremiah 1:19 and Psalm 34:19, among many places in the Bible. We aren't promised a pain-free life, we're promised grace to persevere.

Jeremiah experienced this grace through a life-giving relationship with God – his books records many of the conversations they had as he experienced a range of emotions and difficulties. But as he stayed committed, God strengthened him and grew him. He learnt to trust God day by day, one obedient choice at a time. It's the same for us: today, we trust and obey. We love God and our neighbours, we read His Word and speak with Him, we do the particular things He's called us to do. And tomorrow we do it all again. And as days become decades, we realise that He has kept us.

Questions for general discussion

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how upside-down does your world feel right now? (1 = basically the same as normal, 10 = nothing is normal and it feels like it's never going to be again)
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how upside-down do you think your life is compared to your non-Christian peers? (1 = basically the same, 10 = totally different)
- What does the start of Jeremiah's story tell us about God? What do you find encouraging about this?
- Can you share a time when God spoke to you in a clear and remarkable way? (Some may never have experienced this and won't want to answer)

Questions for personal application, perhaps in groups of two or three people

- Thinking about the score out of 10 you gave for how different / the same your life is to your non-Christian peers: are you satisfied with your answer? Should Christians be totally different? In what ways?
- Did you experience God speaking to you about clarity when Luke prayed for that in his preach? Do you feel you know what He's calling you to do?
- Which of the three areas Luke highlighted do you want most to grow in right now: confidence in God, in clarity on what He's called you to do, commitment to Him? What are the first steps you can take to do this?
- Pray for each other.



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