

24-01-01.wpd—The Call of Jeremiah

religion, service, empowerment, calling, revelation, guidance

Jer 1:4-10

Who we are, and what we are to do and say, all depend on God.

### **INTRODUCTION:** (text as the Scripture reading)

—What does “*religion*” have to do with the God of the Bible? Almost nothing, except that the God behind the Bible always comes out pretty strongly against religion. That’s because *religion* is always a human attempt to get into a right relationship with God. There’s a problem with that concept. It assumes that man (a *finite* being) has the ability to establish rapport with God, (an *infinite* Being). It assumes that man knows the mind of God and can do what it takes to get on God’s ‘good side.’ That is assuming much too much, and Scripture lets us know it.

—The Book of Jeremiah starts out with a denial of *religion* as the reality behind a relationship with God. **HOM.idea**. We do not initiate our relationship with God....

### **I. God Initiates Our Relationship with Him, v. 4-5**

A. v.4, *The word of the LORD came to me...* (the direction of Scripture is US-WARD not GOD-WARD) – It’s strange but true that “*The Bible is not a pathway we take to bring us to God.*”

1. God uses the Bible to point to the pathway, to keep us on the pathway, or to get us back on track when we’re off the pathway.
2. BUT, the path it points out, is a personal, intimate relationship with God, which ultimately can only be fulfilled in Christ—**John 5:39** (ESV), You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.

B. When the *word of the LORD* came to Jeremiah, the first thing God told him was that He Himself had initiated their relationship:

1. Religion could have played no part in it, because Jeremiah was not even born yet—v.5, “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.*” (What a comfort to know that God loved us when we were just a ‘twinkle’ in His eye.)
2. But that’s not all.... because God even before our physical birth or our new birth in Christ, God appointed us to be His servants.

**TRANS:** “Who do you think you are? Who do you think you are? Who do you think you are?” No matter how we ask that question, we don’t have the right answer for it until God gives it to us. We might have had a bad upbringing. We might have had emotional trauma in our lives. Or maybe we didn’t have the best education. It doesn’t matter. **Who we are, and what we are to do and say, all depend on God.** God, in whose image we are made, is our Designer and our Definer. He tells us who we really are, no matter who we think we are. And it’s not religion that establishes rapport with Him. He initiates our relationship with Him.

### **II. God Enables Our Service for Him, v. 6-9**

A. v.6, “Ah, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.” [Our excuses are sometimes so unrealistic. Have you ever seen little children shy about making verbal noise? Have you ever seen them inhibited about interrupting adult conversations or about blurting out personal or family facts at inappropriate times? No, they’re all very verbal, unless they’ve fallen under the adult principle that says, “*Children are to be seen and not heard.*”]

1. Our trouble is that we are not enough like children! Jesus said in **Mat 18:3** (ESV), “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And in **Mat 21:16** (GW) when they said to him, “Do you hear what these children are saying?” Jesus replied, “Yes, I do. Have you never read, ‘From the mouths of little children and infants, you have created praise?’” “*On the contrary, Jeremiah, if you were more like a child, you’d have no problem.*”
2. But we DO have problems: maybe we were told to be still, as we grew up, maybe we were criticized for stating our opinions; or laughed at for making mistakes. (Our unwillingness to speak up may be supported by legitimate excuses based on real reasons.)
- B. But no matter what excuse we use to build our case, God’s has a stronger case, because He has stronger reasons: **v.7-8**, *But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.*
  1. If God identifies us as His servants, then we must go to everyone He sends us to, and say whatever He commands.
  2. If we have past reasons for being shy about speaking, God has stronger ones why we should not be afraid (even of great crowds):
    - a. He says, “*I am with you*” (He and you together make a majority!)
    - b. “*I...will rescue you*” (Despite all opposition, we win in the end!)

**TRANS:** If the battle was *our* battle, *our* conflict, *our* war, we might be on the losing side. But it's not *our belief system* or *our religion* we are standing for and speaking for. We are servants of the King of creation. He created every single person in the largest crowd. And if we face that crowd, we do it with Him beside us. It's *His* battle, *His* conflict, *His* war. **Who we are, and what we're to do and say, all depend on God.** We don't have to worry about what part we're to play in the battle...

### III. God Reveals Our Calling from Him

- A. He clearly revealed Jeremiah's job description to him—v.10, *See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.*” (We can expect the same).
- B. God would not be a very efficient Organizer if He did not communicate well. [No organization lasts without clear communication from the top down, whether it's a large corporation or a small business.]
- C. The instructions given in v.10 were specific to Jeremiah, but in some ways they also apply to us, for God has appointed us...
  - 1. *to uproot and tear down* - (When useful practices bog down or break down, God's people must speak up about the need for renewal and reformation [ie, the abuses of TV evangelism; the blind religious obedience Christians give to the pharmaceutical industry; the church's withdrawal from 'secular' concerns])
  - 2. *to destroy and overthrow* - God's people should always speak out for the total elimination of certain things [ie. domestic violence; human trafficking; pornography; abuse of political, economic or educational power].
  - 3. *to build and to plant* - Our central Christian concern is to speak into every situation any facet of God's kingdom that is not being done on earth as it is in heaven (which is as simple as suggesting the practice and benefits of gratitude, forgiveness, or kindness.)

### CONCLUSION:

—Don't wonder about *who you are*. Before you were born, God knew you would one day be His servant. Don't be afraid to speak up for Him. He'll give you the words and be right beside you, when you say them. Don't worry about what to say. You're a child of the King, and “*Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done*” will guide you in everything that needs to be spoken into any circumstance or situation. **Who we are, and what we're to do and say, all depend on God.**

Jeremiah 1:4-10 ( NIV )

- 4 The word of the LORD came to me, saying,
- 5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”
- 6 “Ah, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.”
- 7 But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.
- 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.
- 9 Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “Now, I have put my words in your mouth.
- 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”