

24-01-02.wpd—The Ministry of Jeremiah
 vision, seeing, speaking, ministry, opposition, protection
 Jer 1:11-19

Our confidence comes by trusting God's Word and following His will.

INTRODUCTION: (read **text** as Scripture Reading)

–OT prophets were looked upon with respect when they preached that God's people would be delivered from their oppressors, but they got persecuted for preaching that God's people were sinning and needed to be delivered from their evil ways. The “ministry of Jeremiah” (**title**) is an example of that latter situation. He got no respect for his preaching. Instead, it brought him persecution. But Jeremiah knew that he was God's messenger. He could live out his ministry confidently, because he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he had God's word and was in God's will. His story illustrates our own. **HOM.idea.**

I. God Wants Us to See What to Say and What to Trust

- A. God uses illustration after illustration to instruct us, because He built humans to learn that way (It's why the Bible is full of stories) [When we hear something explained], we sometimes ask “*Can you show me how to do that?*” But often we ask, “*Can you show me that one more time?*”].
- B. Prophets in the OT were also called seers because God let them see what to say and then had them say what they saw– **v.11-12**, *The word of the LORD came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied. The LORD said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled."*
 1. The word **almond branch** in Heb. is a *homonym*, a word that sounds like the word **watching**. [God making a play-on-words or a pun]: “*David, what do you see?*” “*I see a blue altar piece.*” “*Exactly right! You blew it, and until you alter your ways, you won't have my peace!*”]
 2. God uses *symbols* and *sounds* to get our attention and make His point stick in our minds (Jeremiah would think of God *watching to see that [His] word is fulfilled* every time he saw an *almond branch*.)
- C. What God was concerned about Jeremiah remembering (and what He wants us to remember) is that He is standing behind His Word, making sure that His prophecies and His promises are fulfilled.
 1. **God takes care** in what He says. (He doesn't mince words, but comes to the point. He doesn't make promises He won't keep.)

2. **God takes care** of His Word, once it is spoken. (People have tried to eradicate this Bible from society, but the reason we have it today is because God has watched over it all these years.)
3. **God takes care** that His Word is carried out– **Num 23:19** (ESV), God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (This often-quoted verse came from the lips of Balaam, a rebellious renegade prophet. If Balaam knew this to be true about God, how much more did the faithful prophet Jeremiah know it!)

TRANS: Because of who God is, the “fear of the Lord” is foundational to a relationship between the Almighty Creator and any intelligent being He created. BUT because of who God is, our ultimate safety is in Him. [There's a place in the *Chronicles of Narnia* where the Beavers are describing Aslan to the children, and that description illustrates how we need to see and trust God:

"Aslan a man!" said Mr Beaver sternly. "Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea. Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion - the Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh!" said Susan, "I'd thought he was a man. Is he - quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."

"That you will, dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs Beaver; "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

"I'm longing to see him," said Peter, "even if I do feel frightened when it comes to the point."

What God wants us to see and know is that there is fearful, sovereign power in His Word, and because of that, there is absolute and eternal safety in His will. This is an awesome part of the Christian faith. **Our confidence comes by trusting God's Word and following His will**. But God also wants us to see and know that there is no power and no safety outside of a right relationship with Him.

II. God Wants Us to See the Danger of Rejecting Him (v.13-16)

- A. Jeremiah saw next a giant boiling pot of stew from the North ready to spill out on rebellious Judah. And guess what? He was being called by God to “spill the beans” about that coming judgment.
- B. God's perfect will is not that His people be overcome and scalded by ungodly authorities and worldly influences, but that is the cost

of rejecting God's Word and God's will. (The pagan world has its own agenda for infiltrating the minds and hearts of God's people. If we want protection from those influences, we must stick with our Maker, and not stray from His side. God will walk us through this life in spiritual safety, if only we will do the *smart* thing.)

- C. What is the stupid thing, the foolish thing: God describes it in v.16, ... their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made.
1. God doesn't need our worship to tickle His Ego—His thrill is to watch us grow and fulfill the spiritual potential planned for us.
 2. God knows we reach the top only by a healthy relationship with Him through the power of His Word and the safety of His will, so He never stops calling us to that one essential relationship.
 3. Worshiping the idols we make for ourselves cuts us off from that relationship. (This is why all of Scripture cries out against idolatry, because it destroys our true human destiny with God.)

CONCLUSION:

—God is no respecter of persons. He loves those He must judge no less than He loves those He calls to proclaim that judgment. So, He tells Jeremiah in v.17a, "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. But a failure to trust Him causes a failure in victorious Christian living. So, God also tells him in v.17b, *Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Godly fear and godly faith must overcome the fear of the threats that confront us temporarily in this life.*

— What God told him earlier in v.8, He repeats to Jeremiah, *and to us*, in v.19, *They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. God Himself is enough for us, no matter what resistance we meet from the world, the flesh or the devil.*

Our Christian confidence comes by trusting His Word and following His will. It's how we relate to God in a *healthy, proper* way. It's the only way to have His power and safety in this life and beyond.

Jeremiah 1:11-19 (NIV)

11The word of the LORD came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied.

12The LORD said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled."

13The word of the LORD came to me again: "What do you see?" "I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north," I answered.

14The LORD said to me, "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land.

15I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms," declares the LORD. "Their kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem; they will come against all her surrounding walls and against all the towns of Judah.

16 I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made.

17"Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them.

18Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land.

19They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.