

Jeremiah's Commission

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. I'm going to be reading from chapter 1 of the book of Jeremiah. The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

It came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

Then he said, And then I said, Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, For I am only a youth. But the Lord said to me, Do not say, I am only a youth, for to all whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord. Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, Behold, I have put words in your mouth.

[1:31] See that I set you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck you up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said, I see an almond branch. And then the Lord said to me, You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.

The word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, What do you see? And I said, I see a boiling pot facing away from the north. Then the Lord said to me, Out of the north, disaster shall be let loose upon the inhabitants of the land.

For behold, I am calling the tribes of the kingdom of the north, declares the Lord, and they shall come, and everyone shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls, around and against all the cities of Judah.

And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

[2:44] But you dress yourself for work. Arise and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them.

And I behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land.

They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you. Good morning, everyone.

Well, I'm going to be speaking this week and next week from the opening chapters of the book of Jeremiah. And let me just say briefly how that came about, and then we'll get into it.

How did it come about? Well, some of you will have received an email this week, or most of you probably, to say that I've started work as a pastor here as of this month, which is we moved the start date forward a month.

[3:55] And I think maybe... I think maybe the elders were worried I'd sit around doing nothing, so they asked me to preach. And so we've pushed our series from Jonah back a couple of weeks.

We'll start that in a couple of weeks, and I'll be speaking from Jeremiah. These talks have grown out of a series of talks I gave for NCS at Windicon a few years ago.

So the book of Jeremiah had been largely opaque to me. I really...I knew some bits of it, but I didn't really have a sense of the book as a whole. And so I was eager to tackle it myself.

It makes up 5.2% of the Bible, Jeremiah. And yet maybe like me, you're sort of unfamiliar with it. So that's why I wanted to tackle it with NCS.

And as I prepared that series, I fell in love with the book. But I was also sort of exhausted by preaching it. And so after preaching it at a conference a few years ago, I then kind of just...

[4:54] I don't know, like I kind of hid it away in a cell in my mind and locked the door and threw away the key. But recently I've been sort of trying to peek in through the keyhole just to try and reabsorb some of the lessons I had from the book.

And so it's something I've been thinking about. I thought it might be helpful for us to think about together. I'm not promising a series on the book of Jeremiah, but we are just going to dip our toes in the water in the first couple of chapters over the next...

Oh, this week and next. But I want to start by asking you a question. Do you expect it to be easier or harder to be a Christian over the next 40 years?

If you consider the next four decades ahead of us, do you think it'll be easier to be a Christian or harder to be a Christian? Now, I'm no expert when it comes to predicting the future. I think there can be a tendency among Christians to be doomsayers and pessimists, and I think we should resist that temptation.

But I think we would be naive if we were to say we expect it to be easy. Absolutely, in certain parts of the world, it will certainly not be easy.

[6:08] I'm thinking, for example, of northern and central Africa, countries like Nigeria and neighbouring countries where Islamic extremists run rampant terrorising and murdering Christians.

But even in the West, even in Western countries like Australia, politics and political discourse have become increasingly embittered.

And sometimes Christians are either drawn into that or even fall afoul of it. You might remember in September last year the assassination of Charlie Kirk. I think that's an indication that there's an undercurrent of resentment in our society that can turn violent.

And it emerges particularly at the intersection of religion and politics and social issues. Now, I think outright violence will likely remain rare.

But sadly, violence is not inexplicable, given that there is, in some segments of our society, this undercurrent of hostility.

[7:17] Of course, hostility is not the whole story. It's not the full story. We're also, in our society, seeing a rise in sympathy toward Christianity and interest in Christianity.

So I have a friend who's a university lecturer. And he's a lecturer in politics and political theory. As his university started back in the last couple of weeks, he's been teaching 800 first-year students in political theory and politics.

And his interest in free speech and his argument against sort of the encroaching of post-modernism in academia, which has sort of led to an erosion of the concept of truth.

So he's opposing that. That has led him to greater openness towards Christianity and even to engaging with the Bible. He's not yet a Christian.

But there is sympathy there because of how he feels, where he feels our culture is heading and his discomfort with that. But no doubt, hostility is also present in at least some segments of our society.

[8:33] Now, in that present social climate, there are two risks, I think, for us as Christians. Here are, or there may be a number of them, but here are two. One risk is that we might become defensive, you know, develop an us-versus-them mindset.

And so rather than trying gently to persuade those with whom we disagree, we, you know, we put the walls up and just aggressively assert our own rights, us-versus-them.

But there's another risk, and that is that we might, that Christians might become timid, fearful, withdraw, cowed into silence, keep our heads down, try not to be noticed, try to avoid trouble.

That's a danger, too. Well, the Bible passage today, Jeremiah chapter 1, will encourage us that we don't need to be defensive and we don't need to be timid as we engage with our world around us. Will you join with me in prayer? Then we'll come to the text. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can gather here today and reflect on your word.

[9:51] And now we ask, Lord, that the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts may be acceptable in your sight. Our Lord, our Rock, our Redeemer.

Amen. We'll have a look again at chapter 1 of Jeremiah, verses 1 to 3. The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

It came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

The first two verses of the introduction to this book capture the dual nature of the text we're reading here and indeed of all the Bible. But the dual nature of the text here, verse 1, these are the words of Jeremiah.

Verse 2, this is the word of the Lord. That's the dual nature of Scripture, both a divine and a human word. The Scriptures, including the book of Jeremiah, is a divine word, infallible, perfect, true, powerful.

[11:14] God asks in Jeremiah chapter 23, verse 28, what does straw have in common with wheat? And he's talking about his word.

He's comparing his word, which is true and good and which nourishes the soul, with the empty imaginings of false prophets. What does straw have in common with wheat?

In the next verse, Jeremiah 23, verse 29, God says, is not my word like a fire? Is not my word like fire and like a hammer that breaks rock in pieces?

God's word is powerful. This is the word of the Lord. But when we read Jeremiah, we are also reading the words of Jeremiah. Jeremiah, now there are some books in the Old Testament where the author is unknown and essentially irrelevant, the human author, that is.

Jeremiah is not one of those books. The man Jeremiah is very much present in this book. These are his words and they can't be separated from the life he lived and the things he experienced.

[12:25] Much of the book of Jeremiah, in fact, already existed in written form in his lifetime. But some ordering and framing took place after his death, like this introduction, verses 1 to 3, and a final chapter, an epilogue in chapter 52.

But who was Jeremiah? Well, Jeremiah, we're told, he was the son of Hilkiah, which is a common name, so that doesn't tell us much. He's one of the priests at Anathoth in Benjamin. Anathoth is near Jerusalem, so near the capital city, about five kilometres to the northeast of Jerusalem.

And so in this book, we'll often find Jeremiah in Jerusalem, at the temple or at other places in the city. We'll see him speaking with priests and indeed with kings and officials.

His membership in a priestly family may have given him some access, some standing, but it seems he wasn't particularly of high rank himself.

Well, Jeremiah was a young man when the Lord called him and he had a long ministry spanning about 40 years. And spanning the reigns of five kings, three of those five kings are named here.

[13:42] The other two only ruled for three months each. And each of the three named kings, Josiah, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, are significant in the events that unfold, especially the second and third of those.

But the events of the first chapter, his prophetic call, it seems, occurred in the 13th year of King Josiah. So this is around the year 626 BC.

And yet at the outset, we're told about another event, an event that at that time was future, that would occur 40 years later. At the end of Jeremiah's ministry, in the year 587, the end of verse 3, the captivity of Jerusalem.

The captivity of Jerusalem was a series of forced deportations by the Babylonians of the people of Judah into exile in Babylon.

The most momentous of those was in 587, where after a horrific siege, King Nebuchadnezzar captured the city. He burned the city with fire. He burned the temple to the ground.

[14:50] And he carried off thousands of people as captives. And for those who lived through Jeremiah's ministry, that's the captivity of Jerusalem. That was future. And so in a sense, it was prospective. It was perhaps one possible future outcome. Maybe even a remote outcome in their minds.

But for those of us who read the book of Jeremiah in its final form, that is in the past. And that terrible event casts its shadow over the whole book.

So that comment at the end of verse 3 is sort of a major spoiler of what was coming in the rest of the book. And it places Jeremiah in that biblical history for us. Well, this is where the book's heading.

But it begins with God calling young Jeremiah, this young priest, in the 13th year of Josiah's reign. Verse 4. Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.

[15:57] And before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations. I mean, we see here in verse 5 the breadth of the Lord's authority.

That God is sovereign over time, past and future. Before I formed you, God says, I knew you. And we see that God's power is active at the macro and the micro level.

God forms the unborn child in the womb of his or her mother. And God rules over nations. The same Lord who determines the fate of nations also assigns the place and the calling of each individual. He says to Jeremiah, I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

But Jeremiah himself is not so sure. Now at times, God calls people who are eager for appointment.

[17:07] So when God calls Isaiah, Isaiah says, or when God calls for someone, Isaiah says, here I am, send me. But often God calls those who have their own self-doubts.

So King Saul, on the day that Samuel presented him to Israel, had to be fetched from where he was hiding among the supplies. Jeremiah had his doubts.

Verse 6. Then I said, ah, Lord God, behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth. You know, I do not know how to speak.

That objection had been tried by Moses before, as Lachlan mentioned in the kids talk. They've been tried by Moses, but God wasn't buying it.

And maybe Jeremiah knew that that objection wasn't good enough on its own. So he adds, I'm only a youth. You know, Moses, he was a mature man when you call it, but I'm just a, I'm a youngster.

[18:13] But God will have none of that objection either. Verse 7. But the Lord said to me, do not say I am only a youth, for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

Now, I don't know if, Lachlan, I don't know if you're reading the script of my talk, but I also had an illustration about a balance bike in here. So I'm going to press on with that. When one of my kids is scared to try something new, I'll try to convince them that it's within their ability.

That they're able to do it. You can do it, I'll say. I'll try and encourage them. And so, when they're making that transition from, you know, discarding the training wheels from their bike, I'll say, well, remember, when you rode a balance bike, you could balance on the balance bike.

You don't need training wheels on your pedal bike. You can do it. I'll try to reassure them to bolster their self-esteem, their self-confidence. Is that God's approach here?

Well, not exactly. God doesn't say, well, Jeremiah, remember, like, you won a prize in school for public speaking?

[19:38] You're the best man for the job. He doesn't say that. In fact, he doesn't really engage with Jeremiah's objection at all. He just dismisses it.

He just restates the call. Don't say, I'm only a youth, for to all whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Just restates the call in the form of, this time, of a command.

You must go. You must speak. So don't be surprised if God calls you to a task that seems beyond your ability.

God doesn't need our self-confidence, and God's not hindered by our self-doubts. God doesn't call the gifted. God gifts the called.

God's not hindered by our self-doubts. God's not hindered by our self-doubts. And sometimes the Lord sends us where we would not choose to go. But he never sends us on our own. Look at verse 8.

[20:45] Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord. God reassures Jeremiah, promising his presence and his protection.

I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord. Now, and I guess it is reassuring. But you might also realise it's reassuring in a foreboding kind of way.

Like someone lending you a car for a long trip and saying, just make sure you have NRMA roadside assistance on speed dial. You know, it doesn't really inspire confidence.

Or someone telling you as you head out for an ocean swim, don't worry about the sharks, they prefer surfers. Do not be afraid of them, says the Lord.

Hang on, hang on. Why do I need to be afraid? Just slow down a bit. I will deliver you, says the Lord. Hold on up a moment, God. Why will I need deliverance?

[21:55] See, not only is God calling Jeremiah to something he doesn't think he can do, but already Jeremiah will sense that there will be opposition and there will be danger.

But God will give Jeremiah what he most needs. Verse 9. Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

It's a symbolic action that illustrates Jeremiah's call to be a prophet. Henceforth, Jeremiah's words would not be his own.

He would speak as the mouthpiece of God. But every word he needed, the Lord God would give him. And finally, God again reiterates Jeremiah's call, filling out what his ministry would be about.

Verse 10. See, I've set you this day over nations and over kingdoms to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

[23:21] God repeats what he's already said in verse 5, that Jeremiah's a prophet to the nations, plural. There are times throughout the book where we might be tempted to forget that and think that Jeremiah's just a prophet to Judah, just a prophet to the people of Israel.

But from the moment of his call, God says his ministry has a wider scope. It's to the nations. But you'll see here, it's not just as in verse 5, to the nations, but here in verse 10, I've set you this day over nations and over kingdoms.

In Jeremiah's day, it would seem like the little kingdom of Judah was utterly at the mercy of greater forces, of world powers, of conquering invaders.

And humanly speaking, it was. But the deeper reality is that all the nations and all the kingdoms of the world and all their cities and all their armies are subject to the word of God.

Nigeria, Yemen, Afghanistan, China, the United States, Australia, all subject to the word of God. The word of the Lord stands over all nations and all kingdoms.

[24:45] And what was the word of God regarding the nations and kingdoms of the world in Jeremiah's day? Well, it's summarised in those six verbs in the second half of verse 10, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

Now, those six verbs are weighty ones in the book of Jeremiah. When they pop up later in the book, it's worth taking notice. But three things are evident just from Jeremiah's commissioning here.

First, we see that Jeremiah's message would be mixed. It would involve both negative and positive. There's plucking up, but there's planting.

There's destroying, there's breaking down, but there's building. There's a mix. There's negative and positive. But secondly, the balance would lean decidedly in one direction.

There would be more that is negative than positive, more demolition than recreation. And yet thirdly, the negative precedes the positive.

[25:54] First comes the destroying and overthrowing, then the building. First comes the plucking up and breaking down, then the planting. To borrow an expression from one commentator, the message of Jeremiah is

that there would be terrible trouble, but then wondrous renewal.

And we hear some of that same message again in the teaching of Jesus, don't we? That there will be terrible trouble, but there is wondrous renewal. Now, in one sense, the call of Jeremiah the prophet ends at verse 10.

And in the rest of chapter 1, we hear the first two messages the Lord gave to his newly appointed prophet. But they are messages which clarify, further clarify, Jeremiah's call.

Now, I've divided them into three points on your outlines, just to make it a bit easier to follow. But technically, there are just two messages here. You see the first one in verse 11 introduced, and the word of the Lord came to me.

And that one's brief, verses 11 to 12. But then in verse 13, we have the word of the Lord came to me a second time. And that seems to encompass all of verse 13 to 19.

[27:10] Now, if verse 13 is the second time, then verse 11 must be the first time, which means that when it says the word of the Lord came to me in verse 4, well, that's not counted in these two messages in the second half.

It's kind of in a category of its own. So it's the verses 4 to 10, like the commissioning, and then these two words, which help explain the commissioning. So what are Jeremiah's first messages? They involve an almond tree, a boiling pot, a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall. So first, an almond branch. Look at verse 11. And the word of the Lord came to me saying, Jeremiah, what do you see?

And I said, I see an almond branch. Then the Lord said to me, you have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.

Now, how many of you like puns? Gareth, Gareth likes puns. Yep. Simon likes, yes. Yep. Joel, yep. Okay. I can see, yep.

[28:15] Some people like puns, some people don't like puns. Well, God obviously likes puns. So if you like puns, you're in divine company. Because what we have here is a word play. Almond branch is the word shakade.

And watching is the word shakade. And in fact, shakade, shakade. In fact, if you write them out in Hebrew, the consonants are identical. It's only when you sort of vocalize them out in vowels that you have a different expression of those consonants.

So the same three Hebrew consonants. So God's using a word play here. He's using a pun. And the whole point of this visual pun, the almond branch, is I am watching, shakade, over my word to perform it.

I am watching over my word to perform it. Now there are two reasons we need to know this, that God is watching over his word to perform it. First reason we need to know this is that if God is watching over his word to perform it, then his word will be performed.

It will be fulfilled. Everything God has said will happen. Every promise God has given his people will be fulfilled. Every purpose God has will be accomplished.

[29:33] God is watching over his word to perform it. In the pages of Jeremiah, there are people who say, no, God will not pluck up and break down. God will not destroy and overthrow.

But God is watching over his word to perform it. He will do what he says he will do. On the other hand, when God's plucking up and breaking down is underway, when he's destroying and overthrowing is complete in the captivity of Jerusalem, mentioned in verse 3, at that time, one could scarcely dare to believe so terrible would the times be.

One would scarcely dare to believe that God will build and plant. But God is watching over his word to perform it. And when you read in the word of God that our saviour will return, that we'll see him face to face, that we'll be raised like him, that he'll transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious bodies, that as we saw at the church camp last weekend in 2 Peter 3, there is a new heavens and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

And moreover, when we read that God is guarding his people, guarding us until that day, that God is carrying on the good work he began in us until it's complete, when we read all these things we can know that God is watching over his word to perform it.

His purposes, his word, his promises will not fail. There's a second reason it's good for us to know that God is watching over his word to perform it and that is if God is watching over his word to perform it, then it is not up to us to watch over his word to perform it.

[31:37] Now let me explain what I mean there. Of course we do watch over his word as we wait for its fulfillment and we listen to his word as we seek to obey it, but we don't watch over God's word as God watches over God's word.

That is, we don't arrogate to ourselves the responsibility to ensure God's word is fulfilled. That is God's doing, not ours. In the past several decades there has been much emphasis on church growth.

Church growth manuals, church growth conferences, church growth workshops and we expect, can expect leaders of church, pastors, elders and so on to grow the church, to have a vision for growth and so on with measurable goals and strategies to achieve those goals.

But we must remember it's Jesus Christ who said, I will build my church and it's God who places the parts of the body, every one of them just as he wants to.

Now of course we, church leaders but all of us, all believers, we need to give ourselves to the means that God has, that Christ uses to build his church.

[33:03] We must give ourselves to those means, to the word of God, to prayer, to deeds of love. But remember it's God who's watching over his word to see that it's fulfilled.

It's God who will do it. And that's the first message Jeremiah received, the almond tree, the almond branch, God is watching. What about the second message?

The disturbing news for Jeremiah is that before the building and planting must come the plucking up and breaking down, the destroying and overthrowing. Verse 13, the word of the Lord came to me a second time saying, what do you see?

And I said, I see a boiling pot facing away from the north. Then the Lord said to me, out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land.

For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord, and they shall come and everyone shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem and against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah and I will declare my judgments against them for all their evil in forsaking me.

[34:21] They have made offerings to other gods and worshipped the works of their own hands. Christians. Now this is what lay ahead for Jerusalem. This is what lay ahead for Jeremiah, for the Lord's prophet.

The boiling pot tilting towards Jerusalem from the north, pouring out disaster. Actually pouring out the worst kind of disaster.

A disaster that was completely justified and thoroughly deserved. You know it's bad enough when we suffer and we don't deserve it because if we suffer and we don't deserve it, then we might at least hope for some sympathy.

But to suffer only the just desserts of our own wicked deeds, as God says he is doing there, here in verse 16, I will declare my judgments against them for all their evil, to suffer the just desserts of our own wicked deeds as Jerusalem was about to do, what hope is there?

What sympathy can there be? All of this would have been very unwelcome news for Jeremiah. Had he remained a priest in Anathoth, his life would have been much more serene.

[35:44] I mean, yeah, there would have been that trouble at the end of it, but he could have avoided 40 years of trouble. Jeremiah chapter one is not a very encouraging job description.

If I were Jeremiah, I'd probably be going back to seek.com.au and, you know, trying to find another time and place that needed a profit. But of course, that wasn't up to Jeremiah.

You may well remember Lord of the Rings, the words of Frodo to Gandalf. I wish it need not have happened in my time, said Frodo. So do I, said Gandalf, and so do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide.

All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. And what must Jeremiah do with the time that was given to him?

Verse 17. But you, dress yourself for work, gird up your loins, dress yourself for work, arise, and say to them everything that I command you.

[36:58] Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land.

They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you. The Lord says that the whole land would be against Jeremiah.

The kings, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, would be against him. Officials, priests, people, would be against him. But as he spoke God's word, this young son of Hilkiah, this reluctant prophet, would prove to be as unbreakable as the message he proclaimed.

I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls. There may even be some deliberate irony here, you know, that they're featuring in this book, two fortified cities, Jerusalem and Jeremiah, and one would outlast the other.

At the entrance to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem were two great bronze pillars, each eight metres tall, you can read about them in 1 Kings chapter 7, two great bronze pillars, symbols of the Lord's strength.

[38:32] death. In Jeremiah chapter 52 verse 17, when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem and burned the temple, they took those pillars, they broke them in pieces, and they carried the bronze off to Babylon.

But though Jerusalem and the temple would fall, and though Jeremiah the prophet would suffer and be mistreated, he would nevertheless remain unbreakable because of God's protective presence and God's power to deliver.

Julio Rubel was an evangelist in Colombia in the 1980s and 1990s, and God worked through him to save many, to bring many to know Jesus and to bring renewal in the church.

And yet his ministry, his evangelism and his ministry, he was constantly facing threats from drug cartels who opposed his work.

After years of preaching, he was eventually gunned down by assassins and died for the work of the Lord.

[40:01] But shortly before he died, he said this, he said, in the face of these threats he was receiving from the drug cartels, he said, I know that I am absolutely immortal until I have finished the work that God intends for me to do.

And the same is true for each one of us, isn't it? Each of us who have the gospel on our lips, who have a commission to the nations, who have the promise of God's presence with us.

God has prepared works in advance for you to do, he promises you that in Ephesians chapter 2. Some of those works may seem to be beyond your ability.

some will be things you wouldn't have chosen for yourself. Sometimes people may even fight against you. But we are absolutely immortal until we have finished the work God intends us to do.

For Jeremiah, that meant 40 plus years of, 40 plus hard and painful years as he outlived kings, outlasted cities, and kept proclaiming the word of God.

[41:23] I wonder what it might mean for each of you. Will you join with me in prayer? Amen. Heavenly Father, you are the Lord of nations and you are watching over your word to fulfil it.

No word and no promise of yours will fail. We thank you that you are with us by your spirit to deliver us. Thank you that we do not need to fear whatever sufferings or threats we may face.

Lord God, please give us hearts that are willing to obey you. Wherever you send, Lord, may we go. Whatever you command, Lord. Thank you.