

Jeremiah 1:6: *Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.*

Compare with the following:

Exodus 4:10: *And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.*

1 Kings 3:7: *And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.*

Cambridge Bible Commentary: *Jeremiah shews that the prophetic office was not one of his own seeking. Rather, Alas! The word in the Hebrew expresses not so much an entreaty that things should be arranged otherwise, as a lament that they are as they are; cp. Joshua 7:7; 2 Kings 3:10. Jeremiah's position is thus different from that of Moses (Exodus 4:10). The latter pleaded inability, "Oh Lord, I am not eloquent," while the former acquiesces in the appointment, now announced to have been made so long before, deploring only youth and inexperience (cp. Isaiah 6:5; Ezekiel 3:15 ff.), and replies to the Almighty in the same spirit as Solomon at the beginning of his reign (1 Kings 3:7).*

Compare with the following:

Pulpit Commentary: *Moses feels that he is trying the patience of God to the uttermost; but yet he must make one more effort to escape his mission. I am not eloquent. Literally, as in the margin, "a man of words." "Words do not come readily to my tongue when I attempt to speak; I have never been a fluent speaker, neither yesterday (i.e. recently) nor the day before (i.e. formerly). Nor do I even find that I have become eloquent by divine inspiration since thou spakest with me. Still, I remain slow of speech and slow of tongue." A question is raised whether the mere difficulty of finding words and giving them utterance - a difficulty felt at first by almost every speaker - is here meant, or something further, as "a natural impediment owing to defect in the organs of speech" (Kalisch), or a want of readiness, owing to disuse, in speaking the Hebrew language (Clarke). The latter suggestion is scarcely consistent with the ease and fluency with which Moses had carried on the conversation in Hebrew up to this point. The former is a possible meaning, though not a necessary one. According to a Jewish tradition, Moses had a difficulty in pronouncing the labials b, v, m, ph, p.*

So, in the case of Jeremiah, there is an example of a resigned acquiescence to the call. In the case of Moses, there is an example of a proffered reason why the call should be withdrawn. Both are held up as reminders that we should be weary always of the man who embraces what some may purport to be God's call with too much enthusiasm. God's call is absolute, life changing, and in most cases will lead to great hardship. The man who embraces this with no evident resignation or push back may have ulterior motives or may not be getting his call from the Spirit of God in the first place. The devil's masquerade of a call will be tempting. God's real call will be troubling.

Jeremiah 1:7: *But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.*

Consider the following:

*Acts 26:16: But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.*

*Revelation 10:11: And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*

*Benson Commentary: God refuses to accept of his excuse and renews his commission to him to execute the prophetic office. Thus, God refused to accept the excuse of Moses, made on a like occasion. See Exodus 6:30; and Exodus 7:1-2. Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee — This is not so much a command as a promise: as much as to say, I will enable thee, notwithstanding thy youth, to go with proper boldness to those to whom I send thee, and to declare my commands with that dignity and precision wherewith they ought to be uttered. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee, etc. — The style of God's commission to his prophets and messengers commonly runs in these words, I am with thee, (see the margin,) importing that God, who sent them, would enable them to discharge the office he had committed to them, and would give them strength proportionable to the work in which they engaged. To reprove the faults of all persons, of the high as well as the low, the rich as well as the poor, with that plainness and impartiality which the prophets used, required a more than ordinary degree of courage, as well as of prudence, for which cause the promise of God's presence with them was particularly necessary, to encourage them in the discharge of their duty.*

God is the primary actor in the work of the prophet. Thus, the plainness of speech and manner, the apparent weakness of one's professional or familial relationships, and the many real obstacles in the journey ahead, which rationally would seem to be prohibitive, are not valid excuses for the prophet. For with God all things are possible, and in the work of prophecy, as in a prayer, God is the primary actor as much as the final objective. The call to prophecy is not an invitation for the would-be prophet to assess his chances, for any rational assessment would say that he cannot be successful and will let God down. Rather, the call to prophecy is an invitation to trust in God in a vocation that is intrinsically irrational from the perspective of the world. Trusting in God when contrary to our own reason and the world's lessons and expectations is the first step to Our Lord.

*Jeremiah 1:8: Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.*

*Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary: Jeremiah's early call to the work and office of a prophet is stated. He was to be a prophet, not to the Jews only, but to the neighboring nations. He is still a prophet to the whole world, and it would be well if they would attend to these warnings. The Lord who formed us, knows for what particular services and purposes he intended us. But unless he sanctify us by his new-creating Spirit, we shall neither be fit for his holy service on earth, nor his holy happiness in heaven. It becomes us to have low thoughts of ourselves. Those who are young, should consider that they are so, and not venture beyond their powers. But though a sense of our own weakness and insufficiency should make us go humbly about our work, it should not make us draw back when God calls us. Those who have messages to deliver from God, must not fear the face of man. The Lord, by a sign, gave Jeremiah such a gift as was necessary. God's message should be delivered in his own words. Whatever worldly wise men or politicians may think, the safety of kingdoms is decided according to the purpose of God.*

Being afraid of the faces of men, which is to say, seeking the approval of our peers, is for many the primary objective of their ambition in the world and the gauge by which they determine their success or failure. What God is saying here is that the world's standard cannot be the prophet's standard. It is wise to be aware of how the world will react to the Prophetic Word when put into effect. Nevertheless, the prophet must not hold himself back because of what he sees coming to him in response. The thin line is in fashioning one's vocational ministry to try to be as successful as possible in a hostile world versus watering it down to the point of inadequacy in an appeal to "the faces of men." It is not always easy to see where one has crossed the line from a pragmatic or strategic approach to an effective surrender to the world. The implication from the prior verse is that, if we trust in God, He will counsel us where that line is and how not to cross it.

*Jeremiah 1:9: Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.*

Consider the following:

*Isaiah 6:6: Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.*

*Matthew 10:20: For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*

Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary: *In order to assure him by overt act of His support, the Lord gives him a palpable pledge. He stretches out His hand and causes it to touch his mouth (cf. Isaiah 6:7); while, as explanation of this symbolical act, He adds: I have put my words in thy mouth. The hand is the instrument of making and doing; the touching of Jeremiah's mouth by the hand of God is consequently an emblematical token that God frames in his mouth what he is to speak. It is a tangible pledge of inspiration, embodiment of that influence exercised on the human spirit, by means of which the holy men of God speak, being moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Peter 1:21. The act is a real occurrence, taking place not indeed in the earthly, corporeal sphere, but experienced in spirit, and of the nature of ecstasy. By means of it God has consecrated him to be His prophet and endowed him for the discharge of his duties; He may now entrust him with His commission to the peoples and kingdoms and set him over them as His prophet who proclaims to them His word. The contents of this proclaiming are indicated in the following infinitive clauses. With the words of the Lord, he is to destroy and to build up peoples and kingdoms. The word of God is a power that carries out His will, and accomplishes that whereto He sends it, Isaiah 55:10. Against this power nothing earthly can stand; it is a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces, Jeremiah 23:29. What is here said of the word of Jahveh to be preached by Jeremiah is said of Jahveh Himself in Jeremiah 31:28. Its power is to show itself in two ways, in destroying and building up.*

So, God cleanses the man who is set apart as His instrument of grace for the world. This is an act of consecration, which is to say, to be set apart for a holy end. At the same time, God clarifies to the consecrated man that His Words are the words which will be spoken through him. A prophet is consecrated not to pursue his own end but God's end. The reason is that the prophet's end will not always be in sync with God's end, for the prophet remains a fallen man. Only the Father and the Son in Christ Jesus are in perfect and absolute sync from beginning to end. Thus, God makes it clear that He will fill in where the prophet falters, and so the prophet's judgment when uttered is God's judgment upon the nations.

Jeremiah 1:10: *See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.*

Matthew Poole's Commentary: *I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms: having now received his commission, he is directed to whom he is to go, viz. to the greatest, not only single persons, but whole nations, as the Babylonians, Persians, and Egyptians, and exhorted to greatness of mind, as being sent as an ambassador from God, to deliver his messages without flattery or cowardice; and that he might make that proud people sensible of their folly, that looked upon themselves as above reproof, he gives unto his prophet this large authority.*

*To pull down, i.e. to prophesy that I will pull down; which I will as certainly effect as if thou hadst done it thyself; for, according to Scripture usage, the prophets are said to do that which they foretell shall come to pass, Genesis 49:7 Ezekiel 43:3, i.e. to pronounce destruction; hence God is said to slay them by the words of his mouth, Hosea 6:5; and so are all the following expressions to be understood.*

*To build and to plant; metaphors taken from architects and gardeners. Either the former words relate to the enemies of God, and the latter to his friends; or rather, to both conditionally. If they repent, he will build them up, i.e. he will increase their families, and plant them, viz. settle them in the land, Jeremiah 24:6. If they do not, he will root them up, and pull them down, &c. He will do the contrary. Compare this with Jeremiah 42:10, and Jeremiah 45:4. The reason why God useth so many words to the same purpose seems to be, partly to show how deeply all kind of wickedness and contempt of God had taken root; which possibly may be one reason why he placeth pulling down and rooting up before building and planting, to show what a deal of rubbish there was to be removed before he could reform and repair his church and state; or rather, because the prophet was to begin with these in his prophecy, as appears by his second visions, Jeremiah 1:11,13; and partly to quicken the prophet's zeal against them.*

Remember that God is the actor in and through the prophet. Therefore, just as the Word of God creates, so the Word of God destroys. The latter, when done, is a precursor to a replanting and a possibility of hope for the future, though. Whenever God destroys, it is so that the flood waters may recede and give way to a new life. Only at the end is God's judgment final and the judged outside of Christ Jesus cast into the lake of fire for their annihilation.

Jeremiah 1:16-17: *And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.*

Gill's Exposition: *And I will utter my judgments against them. Not against the kingdoms of the north, but against the people of the Jews. The sense is, that God would enter into judgment with this people, and pass sentence upon them, and execute it:*

*touching all their wickedness; or on account of all their sins and transgressions hereafter mentioned:*

*who have forsaken me. The Targum is, "who have forsaken my worship"; for to forsake the public worship of God, attendance on his word and ordinances, or to forsake the assembling of themselves together for such a purpose, is to forsake the Lord himself, the fountain of living waters; and this is to forsake their own mercies:*

*and have burnt incense to other gods; to the idols of the Gentile, as the Targum explains it; to Baal, to the queen of heaven, and to others:*

*and worshipped the works of their own hands: idols of gold, silver, brass, and wood, which their own hands formed and carved, and which argued great stupidity and ignorance.*

*Matthew Poole's Commentary: Gird up thy loins: by this expression God quickens and hastens him upon his work, not to stand hesitating, but to be doing; prepare thyself: for it is a speech taken from the custom of the countries where they did wear long garments; and therefore, they did gird them up about them, that they might not hinder them in any work that required*

*expedition. See the phrase and practice Exodus 12:11 2 Kings 4:29, and in many other texts. It implies two things:*

*1. Speed and dispatch.*

*2. Courage and resolution, Job 38.*

*Arise; another expression to the same purpose, to speed him about his work.*

*Command thee, Heb. shall command thee. Be not dismayed at their faces; discover no fear, and conceal no message. See Jeremiah 1:8.*

*Confound thee, Heb. break thee in pieces; either lest thou prove confused and shattered in thy notions, and unable to deliver thy message, lest I leave thee and forsake thee; or lest I terrify thee worse than they are able to do, even to ruin thee. See Matthew 10:28.*

*Before them: it seems to be spoken by way of aggravation; God would shame him, or destroy him, even in their sight, to become their reproach.*