

Jeremiah: The Independent Prophet

Sunday School Lesson 4

Personality and God's Purpose

Jeremiah 16

7/5/2020

Introduction: When the Lord observed Adam in the Garden of Eden, He noted that it was not good for man to be alone. As a result, God formed Eve, and Adam was given a helpmeet. From this early portion of Scripture, we understand mankind's need for interaction with others. Yet, it would also seem that there are some who God specifically designs to handle loneliness better than the usual person does. These people are generally going to be more inherently independent than others. This means that they don't have as strong of a need or reliance upon social interaction. They are not opposed to friends, but they are not primarily concerned with finding them. As we look for an example of this in the Bible, we come across an unusual prophet by the name of Jeremiah. God called him at a very young age to be a prophet to Judah. This means that he likely did not even get the full mentorship that other prophets often received prior to the start of their ministry. Furthermore, God told Jeremiah that he was not to have any children or even to get married. Now, most people would really struggle with this type of command from the Lord, but God had created Jeremiah with the personality that he needed in order to help him follow this order from the Lord. Additionally, Jeremiah was instructed not to get caught up with the general affairs of men. He didn't need to go to fellowships or funerals. Despite all of this, Jeremiah never had a breaking point like Elijah where he could no longer handle being alone. While John the Baptist was a social misfit, he at least had many close disciples. Jeremiah had a scribe whom he had to reprimand, and he had a few interactions with some other prophets and Godly men. Let's see how a person with an independent personality can be used by God, and let's also take note of the potential challenges.

I. THE LORD USED JEREMIAH'S PERSONALITY TO HELP HIM DEAL WITH BEING ONE OF THE MOST HATED PROPHETS IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY. (JEREMIAH 1:8; 11:21-23; 12:6; 20)

- A. Notice that Jeremiah was hated by his own family and hometown (Exodus 1:8; 11:21-23; 12:6).** Jeremiah had to deal with animosity from his own family. He was rejected by those in his hometown (Jesus was as well.). There were members of his own household that even plotted to kill him. A person who lives a life without marriage usually at least has some relatives to cling to for companionship. Perhaps, there were some who were friendly to him, but the Bible makes it clear that most of his own family hated him. We commend Abraham for leaving his hometown and family to go into a far country, but at least Abraham's relationship with his family was still healthy. He made sure that his son only married someone from the family lineage. For most, family life is one of the most important aspects of living. A mother's world revolves around her children. A father makes a living to provide for them. Children spend their lives (hopefully) seeking to honor their parents. Jeremiah was able to go through life without the traditional support from family or childhood friends. Undoubtedly, God created Jeremiah with an independent personality fit to endure such extreme loneliness.
- B. Notice that Jeremiah was hated by others in his profession and by the leaders of the nation (Jeremiah 20).** A person without support from family or neighbors will often find connections in the workplace. For Jeremiah, he would not find such friendships. One priest attacked him and threw him in prison. Later, a mob of priests and prophets called upon King Jehoiakim to have Jeremiah executed. Jehoiakim also personally hated Jeremiah and wanted to kill him. King Zedekiah had princes who hated Jeremiah and tried to find a way to kill him. The Bible mentions contemporaries to Jeremiah, but it reveals to us very little interaction that the prophet actually had with these men. There were Godly prophets such as Daniel during Jeremiah's day, but their ministries were vastly different. Jeremiah only had his friendly scribe Baruch who later regretted helping Jeremiah, prompting a rebuke from the Lord. Perhaps, there is somebody in the church who has a similar testimony to that of Jeremiah in this regard. If so, take comfort that the Lord has given you the personality that you need to handle the situation.

II. THE LORD USED JEREMIAH'S PERSONALITY TO KEEP HIM FROM SUFFERING ADDITIONAL PAIN. (JEREMIAH 16:3-4; 36:19-26)

- A. Notice that Jeremiah did not have a wife or children because of the desolation of that day (Jeremiah 16:3-4).** God told Jeremiah the primary reason why he did not need to have a wife or child. It was because there would be no future for them. His wife and children would either be killed or taken away into slavery. Jeremiah was going to go through enough hardship without the need for an added burden of tragedy over his own family. God wanted to spare him from that pain. It may be that in the last days, God will raise up some men like Jeremiah to be the preachers in that hour. While it's good to pray for our children to find a Godly wife or husband, we should also recognize that God raises up some

whom He has a very unique purpose for. Paul spoke about the need for this as the day of the Lord approaches. It's sad to think that there is going to be a generation in this world that really has not positive future, but the Bible tells us that this world will eventually pass away. To this point, we must also consider that being independent in a day filled with great wickedness is a helpful thing. Noah was an independent man in his day. He clearly had no close friends. He only had his family. This made his task significantly easier to handle.

- B. Notice that Jeremiah's few acquaintances were natural targets of his enemies (Jeremiah 36:19-26).** When Jeremiah stood up to the throne and sent a scroll of warning about Babylonian captivity, the king sought to have both him and Baruch captured and killed. This situation is what led to Baruch regretting that he had helped Jeremiah. Certainly, the prophet Jeremiah knew that anyone close to him would be in danger of the wrath of his enemies. The fact that he was very independent and had few friends helped him to avoid greater hurt over the loss of those close to him. During the early church, we know that there were many saints who lived isolated lives. They had enemies who were willing to kill anyone who was even perceived to be a friend of a Christian. The Lord not only knows but has planned the path that we are to go down in our lives. While He does not promise that we will be exempt from hurt or suffering, He does help us by giving us the personalities that we need to best get through the life that we are to live in service to Him.

III. THE LORD USED JEREMIAH'S PERSONALITY TO MAKE SURE THAT THE TRUTH WAS KNOWN TO HIS PEOPLE. (JEREMIAH 5:31; 6:13; 8:10; 14:14)

- A. Notice that the majority of the other prophets were all prophesying a different message than Jeremiah (Jeremiah 6:13; 8:10; 14:14ii).** The prophets were telling the people that everything was going to be okay. They were preaching feel-good messages to them. These were easier messages to preach to the people. Jeremiah had a much different message. His message was a warning that the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent. As you can imagine, this message did not mesh well with the other messages that were being preached. There would have been tremendous pressure on Jeremiah to fall in line with those messages. Yet, Jeremiah was an independent person. More importantly, he was an obedient person. He had a message from God, and he was going to give it to the people. It did not really matter what everyone else was preaching.
- B. Notice that the people wanted the prophets to lie to them and tell them what they wanted to hear (Jeremiah 5:31).** Apparently, having people with itching ears is not relegated to only the day that we live in today. The people living in Jeremiah's day did not want to hear the truth. They preferred to be lied to, as it made them feel better. It's a challenging thing when everybody else is giving a different message, but it's even more challenging when the people don't want to hear your message. It takes some strong independence to choose to speak up anyways, knowing that your message is not popular and not what the people want to hear. It also takes strong faith. Jeremiah is a great example of an independent prophet who was not afraid to go against the grain. He was not afraid to be alone. Of course, he was never really alone. He always had God right there by his side, as we do today as well!

IV. THE INDEPENDENT PERSONALITY ALSO HAS SEVERAL CHALLENGES THAT WE MUST BE AWARE OF. (NUMBERS 16, 20:11; 1 TIMOTHY 5:13; 1 THESS. 4:11)

- A. Notice that the independent personality must be careful not to get too independent, as we are nothing without God (1 Peter 5:6-7; 1 Samuel 15:17; Proverbs 1:5).** Our independence must be through God, not apart from God. As Christians, our relationship with God is supposed to be as a Father and a child. We do not outgrow God to the point of full independence. We need God every second of our lives. The independent person must be very careful not to get too independent that he starts making his own decisions without consulting the Lord. Jeremiah was very faithful to do what God had instructed him to do. King Saul, on the other hand, is an example of someone who got too independent. Additionally, independence does not negate the need for wise counsel if it is available to you.
- B. Notice that the independent person must understand that they are not totally immune to a need for companionship and a feeling of loneliness (Jeremiah 20:8-11).** Jeremiah did have a brief moment where he started to struggle with the life that he was living. He was mocked every day. He had been arrested and dropped in a hole for a period of time. It all started to get to Jeremiah to the point that he voiced his complaint to the Lord. Thankfully, this struggle for Jeremiah was short-lived, and he was able to find comfort in the Lord. However, he had to come to grips with the fact that his life was going to be lonely compared to others. He was not immune to feeling a need for companionship. He had to stay keenly aware of those emotional pitfalls. Sometimes, an independent person gets it in their head that they're totally fine with isolation. Adam was perfect, yet he needed companionship in life!