

Jeremiah

A Fire In My Bones

The Jeremiah, one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, had moments of reluctance. When the Lord called him Jeremiah said, *“Ah Lord! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth”* (Jer. 1:6). The Lord assured him that he would be able to speak due to the deliverance of the Lord (Jer. 1:7-10).

Jeremiah would still have a difficult time because the kingdom of Judah was involved in much sin and depravity. The Northern Kingdom of Israel, due to their idolatrous sins, had been conquered by the Assyrians. Yet Judah learned nothing from this. Now the Babylonians were poised to punish Judah. God sent Jeremiah with a message of repentance, but Judah did not want to hear it.

Jeremiah’s message was not well received and actually angered the hearers. They took out their anger on the prophet. Jeremiah was, at first, ignored, but he continued unabated. Later they mocked him and, finally, openly persecuted him. It was enough to bring him a brief moment of discouragement. Jeremiah said, *“O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; everyone mocks me. For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, ‘Violence and plunder!’ Because the word of the LORD was made to me a reproach and a derision daily. Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.’ But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not”* (Jer. 20:7-9).

Though he was ready to quit due to the indifference of the people, he could not quit. He did not like the scorn and mistreatment, but he found he could not stop delivering God’s message. Did you notice how he said that when he tried to hold back it was *“like a burning fire shut up in my bones”*?

Let me speak on behalf of preachers for a moment. I remember the first time I ever stood before a group and preached. I was scared to death. I could not wait for it to get over. I was fearful that I would “fall on my face.” Yet, when it was over I felt a compelling desire to do it again. The fear soon vanished away, but that desire to preach has never diminished. It is a fire in the bones and I am sure there are others that would say the same. However, this fire in the bones should not just be in preachers. I see where it was in the New Testament. After all Paul said, *“woe is me if I do not preach the gospel”* (1 Cor. 9:16). I also see where there were many brethren, not all preachers, driven out of Jerusalem after the persecution of Stephen. They *“went everywhere preaching the word”* (Acts 8:1-4).

What Jeremiah had, what Paul had, what the brethren in Acts 8 had, and what we all should have is a passion for the word of God. Without this passion we will not obey ourselves and we will not teach anyone anywhere. We will become dry branches fit only to be gathered up and burned (see. Jn. 15:6). This passion is what makes for stimulating teaching and discussion. It is what allows one to persevere in time of trial. Is there such a fire in your bones?