Let us turn to the word of God, the book of Jeremiah. We are just beginning to study this book, which we feel is so relevant and so real in our situation today. Last Sunday morning we had an introductory study. May I earnestly suggest that if you were not here last Sunday morning and you're going to be here for most of these studies, will you please get hold of a cassette? You may borrow it and what-up on last Sunday morning's introduction. It was a foundation study on which we shall build in the rest of these studies. We studied then, the first three verses of chapter one, but I'll read them again together with the rest of chapter one for today's.

**Jeremiah chapter one**; *"The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, 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 Amon, king of Judah in the 13th 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 11th 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, 'Behold, 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 nation.' Then I said, 'Ah Lord God, behold I do not know how to speak. I'm only a youth.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say I am only a youth for all to whom I send you, you shall go and whatever I commend you, you shall speak. Be not afraid of them. For I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.' Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth and the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have 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.'*

*"And the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' And I said, 'I see a ROD OF ALMOND.' 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, evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For lo, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north,' says the Lord. 'And they shall come, and everyone shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem against all its wars roundabout and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgements against them for all their wickedness in forsaking me. They have burned incense to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands. But you, gird up your line, arise and say to them, everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them unless 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 princes, its priests and the people of the land, they will fight against you, but they will not prevail against you. For I am with you,' says the Lord, 'To deliver you."*

One of the most interesting things I saw in Vancouver, was James Cunningham's wall. It was a wall seven miles long and it was built around the main park in Vancouver, a most beautiful area---1000 acres of forest with 1000 trees, 1000 years old; and it's right in the middle of the city...but it's almost completely surrounded by the sea. And JAMES CUNNINGHAM as a teenager, began to build a sea wall around this park to protect it from the ravages of the ocean. And 59 years later he had nearly completed it when he died. Heavy stone by heavy stone, he had cemented that wall. It stands about four to five feet high; and for seven miles around that park he built it. And it was completed by someone else shortly after his death.

Remarkable patience and persistence, keeping it up all those years, devoting your whole life to just one wall...but he'll be remembered for it. Now of course, he had encouragement: he had the encouragement of having the whole city backing him; and he became quite a character, and people would encourage him to go on with the work and to complete it. And the city was paying him to do it. And as far as I know, no vandals ever broke down the wall that he'd built. And so he could look back with pride and see what he'd done, and know that it would last long after he'd gone. And so that was James Cunningham and his wall.

Jeremiah prophesied for the Lord about 45 years. He too, began in his teens, and year after year he went on; and what he was hoping to do all those years, was to build a bulwark around his nation made up of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin...a bulwark that would save his nation from the ravages of a world in turmoil---of nations all around, waiting to attack---and a bulwark against the forces of moral, as well as military evil.

***Three Notes Concerning God’s Call of Jeremiah’s***

But the difference between Jeremiah and James Cunningham was that not one single person encouraged him. Nobody paid him to do it. Furthermore, vandals would break down his work again and again. He would finish up in prison---he would be in danger of his life. And yet for 45 years Jeremiah kept at it, which makes him even greater than James Cunningham. What kept him at his work of trying to build that bulwark...even though for most of the time he realized he'd never get it built and that there would one day be a great storm which would wreck the entire wall and apparently destroy his life's work...what kept him at it? There was only **ONE THING**. And as I mentioned last Sunday, this is what keeps servants of God going when they're going through discouragement. There is one thing that keeps you at it and it's this: ***GOD CALLED***; and if you are sure of that you have no choice. You cannot run away; you cannot get out of the situation. God has called. And that's why the call is so important. When I offered for the ministry, I went along to the minister of our church and I said, "I want to go into the ministry." And he looked at me and his first comment was, "Stay out of the ministry if you possibly can. Go away, don't come back to see me for another 18 months." Which I thought was wrong tactics. After all, don't we want as many people in Christian service as possible, why discourage? But I know now why he said that to me. I went back 18 months later, and I said, "God tells me I ***MUST***, I must. He's ***CALLED***." And time is a good test of God's call. But he knew that unless God was in this you couldn't stick it.

And God knowing Jeremiah was being called to the most thankless task any servant of God has ever faced, the most discouraging situation anyone, any prophet of the Old Testament ever faced... God knew that the call had to be strong, clear, firm, so definite, that for 45 years it would hold Jeremiah at his post. And once God has called, you've got to stay with that until he cancels the call or calls to something else. And God never did change Jeremiah's call.

Now we're going to study that call. There are **THREE NOTES** that are sounded in the call. The **NOTE OF *PREDESTINATION***. I know that's an offense to our human pride---that God should have free will and have the right to decide what to do with my life. But nevertheless, predestination is a fundamental truth. And those who believe in predestination always have a stronger sense that God can KEEP them---that God has called them---because it was HIS decision and not theirs. If it was our decision, we would waiver, but if it was his decision, then we can't waiver.

The next note was the **NOTE OF *PREDICTION*** and that again is something that only God can do, because only God knows the future and only God can unveil it. And in Jeremiah's life, the call revealed that God was a God who spoke the future---who wrote history before it happened. And the third note that is going to be sounded is the **NOTE OF *PROTECTION***---that God is able to deliver those whom he calls from the situations in which they're going to find themselves. Or, to put it at a deeper theological level (if I may use three longer words), in these three notes Jeremiah was learning right at the beginning, three great attributes of God: his ***OMNIPOTENCE***, his ***OMNISCIENCE*** and his ***OMNIPRESENCE***. And because these three dimensions of God were right in the call, these held Jeremiah for 45 years. His **OMNIPOTENCE**: God is absolute power. He's all powerful and therefore, he is able to decide what a person should be before they're even conceived. He is able to form them in their mother's womb. He's able to get them ready for the job. He's able to do this because he's omnipotent, he's in charge of everything.

And secondly, his **OMNISCIENCE**: he's able to say what is going to happen, precisely because he's a God who knows the future and who shapes it. Because he is omniscient, he knows the future, as well as we know the past. The third thing, his **OMNIPRESENCE**: to learn that God will always be with us---the final phrase in this chapter*, "I will be with you."* Doesn't matter where you go; they may throw you in prison....I'll be there. And like the Psalmist who can say, *"If I take the wings in the morning and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me. I can make my bed in hell, you'll be there."* In *'Sheol'* is the word---the world of the departed---which means frankly, in simple terms, I could commit suicide and I still have to face you. Wherever I go, you are there. And that's the omnipresence of God.

And it's only if you've got a constant sense that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present that you're able to face any situation that's likely to occur. If we waiver---if we become shaken---it's because we've forgotten one of those three things. We've forgotten that God can predestinate and order affairs. We've forgotten that God knows everything---that we don't have to explain anything to him. Or we've forgotten that God is right there with us, because in Him we live and move and have our being.

***Jeremiah’s Call: Note 1) Predestination/Omnipotence***

Now all that's introduction, let's look at each three things, each of the three things now. ***FIRST*** of all, divine ***OMNIPOTENCE***---the note of **PREDESTINATION**. Literally, predestination means 'to decide someone's destiny before they do'. To predestine. And the fact is, that God has already decided your destiny. Predestination is primarily to service---not to salvation primarily, but to service. Have you noticed how often in the bible we are predestined to service? In other words, God has decided what your calling in life should be. How important it is that you find it because you've only got one life to live, and you can never have it over again. And to think that God has taken the trouble to plan my life, to predestined me before.

My earthly father nearly predestined me. He knew I wanted to be a farmer, and he was making arrangements for me to have a farm when I was old enough to take it over. And had I taken it over, I could have said my earthly father predestined me to this. But my heavenly Father had other ideas and he had predestined me to something else...born to it. Now Prince Charles was born to be king of England. Sometimes you feel sorry for him. He's got no choice. He can't say, "Well, I'd rather like to be a plumber." He might play at it for a few months to get experience; or learn to fly a helicopter. But basically, he was born to be a prince. He was born to it. He was predestined and he has had to accept that predestination.

In the same way, a young man who was...or a baby boy who was born at the same time as Jeremiah, was born to be king. His name was **JOSIAH**. And Josiah and Jeremiah grew up together. They were the same age, they played as boys. But at eight years of age, Josiah became King. He was predestined. And in the same way as Josiah was predestined to be king, Jeremiah was born to be a prophet. Jeremiah was no afterthought. He was a forethought of God. God doesn't make his plans haphazard. God had Jeremiah lined up for the situation long before he was even conceived. *"I knew you before you were formed in your mother's womb."* I knew you. And the word *'knew'* there is a very deep relationship. It's the same as Adam knew Eve and she bore a son. *'Knew'*: I was related to you long before you were related to me---before you were even thought of, I was related to you.

And you know, one of the great discoveries you make when you become a Christian and get into God's will and into his plan is that he was related to you long before you related to him. He was watching over you, and he stepped into your life, and he was guiding circumstances so surely. And you look back and you just say, "Predestined according to the foreknowledge of God. Hallelujah." To think that it wasn't all on me...to think that he was seeking me...to think that he loved me...to think that he planned my life. That's exciting. So, predestination to me, isn't an intellectual problem, it's an emotional uplift!!

So, Jeremiah was the result of a planned birth---a planned birth; no biological accident, he was planned. And he was formed; and God was shaping him---not just physically, but temperamentally---within the womb. And before even he was born, God had set him apart from other careers...before he was born! And when he was born, God appointed him to be a prophet. And now God informs him of the situation. God is simply telling him what has already been decided. Now you know, there's no room for two first-person singulars in one life. I mean by that the little word ***'I'***, which is the **KEY WORD** of chapter one of Jeremiah.

If you underline your Bibles, underline the word 'I' and you'll be startled with the pattern that emerges. God says, *"I knew you; I formed you; I consecrated you; I appointed you."* And then comes a little voice saying, *"But I am only a youth, and I cannot speak."* Now there's no room for two first-person singulars in one life, and Jeremiah is making a somewhat feeble attempt to assert his first- person-singular against a very strong first-person singular. "The great 'I Am' has spoken." "I,” and God got four 'I's' in to two of Jeremiah's. Which is perhaps significant because later you'll find in chapter 20 (I think it's verse four) Jeremiah says, "God, you are too strong for me. You fought me on you won."

And, I think, that's the story of EVERY servant of God. We didn't choose where we would be. Those of you who may remember the induction service may remember that I confessed freely...that twice I wrote back to a letter from here and just said, "No, I will not come." And God had to humble me, until the third letter I had to say, "Yes." That's the testimony of so many: you try and get your 'I' in. There's only room for one 'I' in my life. It's either the great 'I Am', or it's this one. And Jeremiah was learning this when God called him. Which was going to be the 'I', who decided his life? *"I knew you; I formed you; I consecrated; I appointed you."* And Jeremiah says, "Well, I'm afraid you’ve got the wrong one, Lord."

You know, it's almost cheeky when you realize what he's saying. He's saying, "Lord, you really don't know your job. You've got quite the wrong kind of person." And considering what God was wanting to do with him, I can understand Jeremiah. It's a natural reaction. God said, "I want you to be my spokesman to the United Nations." And remember, Jeremiah was 18 or 19 years of age. "I want you to speak to the world; I want you to be my mouthpiece to all the nations. I want to speak through you to the whole world." And this teenage boy, who was shy and sensitive---he wasn't a brash extrovert, he was a shy, sensitive boy---shrank from people, felt things keenly, was easily hurt---as we're going to see as we study this chapter. And he says, "You've just got the wrong kind of person. I'm not old enough. I've no ability in speaking and I'm just not right, Lord."

And how often that is our first reaction when we're called of God to do something. "I'm not the right one. Here am I, send *him*." This is our reaction. And we try to put the 'I' back in. We don't get very far. God is so gracious that He will listen to an argument; and He loves people to argue with Him. They mean business. He'd far rather you argued with Him than didn't answer Him. But I'll tell you this, you'll never win an argument with God. You never will. But He loves people who wrestle with Him. He loved Jacob because Jacob wrestled with Him and said, *"I'm not going to let you go till you bless me."* He (God) loved Moses because Moses tried this, and he argued and argued until finally, God won the argument. Gideon tried the same thing. You try arguing with God---but at least you're talking to God, and He will win the argument.

And so, there are **TWO THINGS** about Jeremiah's ***REPLY***, which I want you to notice. **FIRST**, he seems to have forgotten ***WHO*** he was speaking to. Do you think? How could he? But he seems to have done. But God did listen and did reply. But the ***OTHER*** THING is to ask ***WHY*** Jeremiah said it. Was he saying it in order to try and HELP GOD, or in order to PROTECT HIMSELF? Do you think he was genuinely saying, "Now God, I really want you to have a spokesman. I really want you to speak. I really want you to speak to the world. I really want to help you. So, I'm going to suggest someone even better than me." Do you think he was really doing that? Or, do you not think this was an excuse? "Anyone but me." In other words, was it genuine *WEAKNESS* or was it an *UNWILLINGNESS* to be used? There is no doubt in my mind from God's reply, that it was ***UNWILLINGNESS***.

He wasn't really concerned about God's work being done efficiently by more able people. He was concerned that he should not get involved. And when we say, "Oh there's somebody else I'm sure, who can do this better than I can." We ought to ask, "Am I saying that because I really want the work done well, or am I saying it because I'm a bit afraid of being involved---especially publicly?"

That's what really laid behind Jeremiah's excuse. And I deduced that from what God said. God simply said, "First, don't be *argumentative*, Jeremiah." He said, "I wasn't *inviting* you to do this job and I wasn't *discussing* it with you. I was ***TELLING*** you. Wherever I send you, you shall GO; and whatever I command you, you shall ***SPEAK***. Jeremiah, I'm ***INFORMING*** you, I'm not inviting you." And God informs people. He doesn't invite them. He tells them, "This is what you shall do. This is where you shall go; and you have no choice but to rebel or submit. You don't discuss." And so, in a very firm, but gentle way, God boosts his morale by being ***FIRM***. And he says, *"Now Jeremiah, you shall GO, you shall* ***SPEAK****."*

But then sensitively, God picks up the other one, and he sees right through to the heart of Jeremiah and says, *"Now Jeremiah, don't be AFRAID."* Literally, "Don't be afraid of their faces." Which is very telling, isn't it? It's people's faces we're afraid of, isn't it? You're never afraid of their backs. Have you noticed that? That's why people much prefer to sit in straight rows. Just look at the backs of heads in front. That's why I've asked sometimes somebody to take part in the services, "Oh, I could never face all those faces."

And it is people's faces that we can get afraid of, and the expression on them---how they look at us---because that may reveal how they're thinking. And frankly, if I took too much notice of people's faces, I'd have been out of the ministry a long time before now. And I guess some have left the congregation because they took notice of mine. But, he says, *"Don't be afraid of their faces."* And you know, 366 times in the Bible, God has to say to someone, *"Don't be afraid."* 366 times! Because fear paralyzes action. Service for the Lord is often crippled by fear, by shyness, by self-consciousness. We're afraid that if we start praying in that prayer meeting, we'll choke up or we'll forget what we were going to say. Fear of people and what they might think of my prayer---they might think it's a very foolish prayer. And so, we're afraid of people; and God has to deal with this. "Jeremiah, I can't use someone who's afraid of people. If you're afraid of people, you'll never make it. So don't be afraid, get rid of that fear."

Now, it was a healthy fear, because the career of a prophet was not a safe one. No insurance agent would've given a life policy to a prophet in those days. Never. Too many of them had come unstuck and been persecuted and been killed, been threatened. And so, it's no wonder Jeremiah was afraid. So, God says, "Now I've dealt with that. Don't be argumentative; don't be afraid. But now, let me touch your mouth." And Jeremiah must have felt a physical sensation on his lips at that point. You can feel physically the touch of God, you know. Though some of you have told me you've had that. Jeremiah felt a finger on his lips. When somebody puts a finger on your lips, it means first, be quiet...shut up...stop it. "Jeremiah, stop talking. I'm going to put my words in your mouth." So, who says you can't speak?

Now, the **ONE PART** of Jeremiah God wanted to have was his ***MOUTH***. And it's the hardest thing to get hold of in anyone. It's the easiest thing to get hold of for evil purposes, because we're born in the kingdom of Satan; and the tongue, says James, *"Is set on fire by hell."* And it's like a spark that can start a prairie fire. And in Canada that really does come home to you. There's an article in Reader's Digest this month on the Canadian forest fires; and they all started with one spark---one little flame. And James says, *"Your tongue is like one flame, one little spark. And it can do so much for good or evil."* And God finds that this is the hardest thing in people to get hold of: their tongue. I'll come back to that later in an obvious connection.

But when God really gets hold of people, he shows it by getting hold of their tongue because that's the hardest thing to control. It's like a little rudder that can move a whole big ship around. It's like a little bit in a horse's mouth that can turn a great big horse around. It has such power for GOOD or EVIL. And the power of your tongue depends on the ***POWER OF YOUR POSITION.***

Think of Adolf Schicklgruber, better known as Hitler. When he was a corporal in the first world war, the only power his tongue had was the power of a corporal. And so, he could push privates around, and he did. But he couldn't push nations around. But as he came to power, his tongue got more power. As he rose in position, his tongue became more powerful---sometimes for good. It was that tongue that ordered the first Volkswagen car. It was that tongue that ordered the first motorways to be built in Europe. And we still drive on motorways in Volkswagens, and we never think of the man whose tongue made those possible. But his tongue gained greater power for evil too---until his tongue could plunge Europe into disaster and cause suffering throughout the world and cause the deaths of 30 million people. Depends on your **POSITION**.

Now Jeremiah is saying, *"I'm but a youth."* Yes, he was. And if he'd spoken just as a youth, then he would've had no power, whatever. His words would've fallen on deaf ears; they'd have achieved nothing. But God says, "My words in your mouth will not just give you a fluency and ability to speak, an eloquency, they will give you ***POWER***. They will set you over nations and over kingdoms. You'll be the most powerful man in the world with my words on your lips." That's what God is saying. The words of God have power in them to do incredible things. They have power to pluck up, to destroy, to break down. They have power to build, to plant. "You'll have power in your mouth, Jeremiah, you'll be the most powerful man in the world...over kingdoms and nations. Over...a teenager."

Now, notice that the power would be more ***DESTRUCTIVE*** than ***CONSTRUCTIVE***. If you look into your bibles, you'll find that there are four destructive things to two constructive. To pluck up, breakdown, destroy, overthrow, are destructive. To build and to plant are constructive. And that's why I chose our opening hymn. *"Know that the Lord is God indeed. He can create and He, destroy."* He does both by WORD. He is so powerful, He just has to say, "Let there be," and there is. And it was with His word that He created the world; and it's with His word that He will one day, destroy the whole world in fire.

He can do ***BOTH***. He can break a men's life; He can make a man's life. He can pull a man down from the top of society. He can lift a man up from the bottom; and His word can do both. "Now, Jeremiah, I've set you over the world. You're a teenager, but my words in your lips, you can smash kingdoms and you can build them up. You can change the atlas; you can write history with your words. Incredible thing.

But I want you to notice which comes ***FIRST***. God has to ***DESTROY*** before he can ***CONSTRUCT***. Let me give you two examples. Monday night I was talking to a gardener not far from here, and he'd been very busy, and he had got a barrow full of couch grass and weeds, dandelion roots. A barrow full from one square yard of soil. Pulled all that out, been working for hours to pluck up; then he was going to burn them and destroy them. Why? Because he wanted to plant something beautiful there. A few days later I walked along Commercial Road and I just paused to watch. I don't know why it's so fascinating to see buildings being pulled down, but there were the cranes with the great weights smashing into the brick walls, and all those things tumbling down in a great heap of rubble. Why are they pulling that? That they may build something new there. And God's word has to ***SMASH*** before it can ***HEAL***. It has to ***HUMBLE*** before it can ***EXALT***. It has to ***CLEAR*** the site before it can ***BUILD***.

How can God build a new life in your life when there's so much rubbish there already? How can He plant beautiful fruit of the Spirit in your life if there are ugly things already growing there? Christ talked about sowing seed among the weeds, and the thorns, and the thistles. You'll have to get those out if the seed is to grow. And so, God’s word is ***DESTRUCTIVE*** as well as ***CONSTRUCTIVE***. It has to break before it makes. It has to get rid of other things before it can produce something new. And Jeremiah was given this double-edged weapon of God's word. You'll have to break a lot down, Jeremiah, and pluck a lot up, and overthrow a lot, and destroy a lot before I can build and plant. But notice there's a little gleam of HOPE there, ---that God intends to build and plant. Well now, that's the note of ***PREDESTINATION***. God has free will; and he's free to choose any one of us to go anywhere, to say anything, to do anything. The only choices we have are to ***REBEL*** or ***SUBMIT***. We have no other. He is God. He made us for Himself.

***Jeremiah’s Call: Note 2) Prediction/Omniscience***

Now the ***SECOND NOTE***, more briefly, ***PREDICTION*** or divine omniscience. Though it follows verses four to 10. It’s obviously on another occasion, and it's equally obviously, in the middle of the night though Jeremiah is awake. And now for the first time, God is going to teach him some lessons in PROPHECY. And God is going to put Jeremiah in the kindergarten where you can learn simply. Now in a kindergarten if you're going to teach little children things, here are **THREE WAYS** in which you may teach, among others. ***FIRST***, use ***PICTURES***...use pictures. If you go into any kindergarten, you'll see the walls plastered with pictures. Go into the small departments of our Sunday school. You'll see the walls plastered with pictures. In the senior departments, you won't see so many. Pictures are good for beginners. ***SECONDLY***, to use ***RHYMING WORD***: cat, mat, sat and all the rest of it. And you'll find that here God uses rhyming words in Jeremiah's kindergarten lesson.

***THIRDLY***, if you're going to teach children, you've got to start with things with which they are ***FAMILIAR***, things that they see every day, so that you can draw lessons from that. And so, you have show-and-tell time and they bring all kinds of things from home and show you. And you use that to teach them something new. Sorry, I know there are many teachers here, and I'm not trying to teach you your job. I'm drawing out what God does here. God is a great teacher.

And so, Jeremiah's ***FIRST LESSON*** consisted of ***TWO PICTURES***--- pictures of things he'd seen many times before and was thoroughly familiar with. But now, a lesson is drawn from them. And with rather clever rhyming words that are going to bring out the real lesson that God wants. So, let's look at them. The ***FIRST*** is a budding rod, an ***ALMOND TREE***. And I'm sure you've seen an almond tree, and I guess you know, without my being told, that it's the very first tree to blossom in the spring. And the blossom comes long before the leaves. And so, it's the first sign that spring is waking up---that nature's waking up again after a long winter. And it's exciting to see the blossom come out. Just to drive up the Epsom Road each spring is a sheer tonic to yourself---to see the pink and white blossom. Now, in the Middle East, it is therefore called the 'Waker Tree'...Waker Tree. In English, W-A-K-E-R. The Waker Tree. In Hebrew, *'shaqad'*. That's in English, 'Waker Tree'. And so they say, "Look, the 'Waker Tree' is blossoming," spring is waking up. And God said, *"Jeremiah, what do you see?"* Well, he said, *"I see an almond tree."* Maybe he was looking out of the window of his bedroom and saw an almond tree outside. But he saw this almond tree; and he saw the blossom coming. And God, with a very skillful play on words, by just changing one letter (a letter ‘*O’* to a letter ‘*A’*), he changed the word from *'waker'* to *'waking'*. And he said, *"Jeremiah, I'm waking up," ..."I'm stirring"..."I'm moving".* To put it another way, to help you to get the message. If he'd said, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And Jeremiah said, "I see signs of spring." "Then you see signs of my 'springing into action'." You get the kind of play on words? An object lesson which Jeremiah would never forget---that God was alert, that God was stirring Himself, that God knew what was going on, that He was watching, and that He was going to act now...something was going to happen. That God had been like that dead almond tree (or it looked dead) for months, through the winter.

You see, for 70 years there'd been no prophet. For 70 years Judah had heard no word from God, and they'd gone through a cold winter spiritually. And God now says, "The winter's over, I'm springing. Something's happening. Learn from nature." After all, it's the same God in nature and history. So, you can draw the parallels so often, as Jesus did. *"Consider the lilies and you'll learn something." "Consider the almond tree. God is waking up."* Springtime...life... stirring.

But there's just one little note in this. He saw a ***ROD***. It means *'a branch of the right size and shape for applying corporal punishment'*. As we might talk about a *'switch'* or a *'birch'*. And there's already a slightly threatening note in the picture---that it's a rod, not just a branch---that God is waking up; but he's waking up in the form of a *whip*, a *rod*. And that must have made Jeremiah think twice.

Now the ***SECOND*** **picture** changes from the *outdoor* to the *indoor*. And maybe Jeremiah, in the one room home in which he would live, was now looking not out of the window, but looking over to the fireplace where there were the dying embers of the fire of the day before. And sitting on the embers, a ***BIG BOILING POT***, a cauldron, precariously balanced on the burning charcoal.

And as Jeremiah watched, he seemed to see that the water was bubbling and boiling---steam was coming off; and suddenly the whole thing just lurched (as maybe a piece of charcoal burnt away underneath) ... it lurched, and it spilled. Now in a home of those days, that was a terrifying thing to happen. You know how careful we are today with safety in the kitchen. It's the most dangerous place. But any missionary in any more primitive society will tell you--- any nurse will tell you---that you get 100s of people coming with scalds, burns. And if a little child is in the way of that cauldron, it can be fatal. And that's what he saw. And immediately, with his young heart, he felt terrified, and he reacted strongly. A boiling cauldron tipping over towards the south.

*"What do you see, Jeremiah?" "I see a cauldron and it's tipping over from the north and there's scaling water coming straight at us."* And God says, *"Now I will tell you what this means. I've told you I'm waking up, but I'm pulling from the north, enemies of Judah. They're going to boil over into your country. They represent my hot anger with your people."*

Who were these dangerous people who were likely to come? We know from history who they were. Away up north of the Black Sea there was a group of tribes called the ***Scythians***, S-C-Y-T-H-I-A-N-S. And suddenly they were on the rampage. Their relatives were the *Goths* and the *Vandals*. Isn't it interesting that one of those names has come right through to today? *'Vandals'*...vandalism. And the Vandals were stirring up in the north and they were laying waste countries; they were invading their neighbors and they were just burning towns down. They were raping women. They were destroying everything they could just for enjoyment, just for the sake of destroying. That's why we call vandals, *'vandals'*, still to this day.

And Jeremiah would know about those vandals; but he would say, "Oh, they're up north of the Black Sea." They were beginning to spread further south and beginning to frighten the Middle East because they were so...well, they were such 'vandals'. And God says, "It's tipping over you." And the fact is that those vandals got as far south as Judah, even as Egypt. God said, *"The cauldron's boiling over. And it's* ***ME*** *who's allowing them to come."* If you think God is not a God of war, you'll have to think again. This Bible is not for you. God says, *"I am bringing those vandals upon you."* As I firmly believe the increase in violence and vandalism in this country is God's doing. Sometimes he has to bring such things, to bring us up with a jerk. We say, "Oh, it couldn't happen here. This is peaceful England." Don't you believe it! You mark my words; violence is going to spread in this land. Vandalism is going to increase. Can't even go to a football match now without vandals breaking through the land.

And God said to Jeremiah, ***"I'm calling them, I bring them."*** Why? Why? **THREE ANSWERS**, listen. ***ONE***, because they have *forsaken their God*. ***TWO***, because they have *gone after other gods*. ***THREE***, because they now *worship the work of their own hands*. Now, do you think none of those three apply to Britain today? It would seem to be an appropriate indictment of our nation. "You have forsaken me after all I've done for you as a nation." What he'd done for Israel. You know what he'd done. Do you realize what he's done for ***THIS*** land? Do you realize that our hospitals and schools were begun by God's people? Do you realize that most of our social welfare was inspired by God through his people?

God has done so much for our green and pleasant land here; but as with Israel, we've forsaken him. There are less than 2% of the people of this country who really know and love God today. There are less than 5% who really go at Christmas and Easter just to nod their caps to him. Even then, they have to be drawn by some special nativity play or something. "***YOU HAVE FORSAKEN YOUR GOD.*** And that's not all. It would be bad enough if you had just left Me, but ***YOU'VE TURNED TO OTHERS***, you've turned to others." And the growth of interest in other religions---British people sold on yoga, Zen Buddhism, I don't know what else. British people taking part in occult and black magic. British people getting interested in all kinds of religion, all kinds of superstition. British people reading their horoscopes by the million. "You've turned from Me; you've turned to others."

And as if that's not enough, in reality, ***YOU'RE WORSHIPPING YOURSELF***, because you're worshiping what you make. You're saying, "I'm God, I can do this. I make this. We can get ourselves out of our own mess." Those of you who were at the debate on humanism in the university...you may remember when I and a professor at the university were debating humanism. He gave a much more brilliant talk than I could give---very compelling, very convincing; but his final sentence was, "I believe that man can solve his own problems; and if he can't, then God help us." And the whole lecture theater burst into laughter and applause; and he'd given me my text just to carry on.

But you see, he is simply stating what most of our politicians believe. They must believe that, or they would talk very differently. They must believe themselves capable of getting us out of the mess we're in... worshiping the work of our own hands, whether it be our scientific works, our works of art, our works of politics---whatever our works may be---we can solve it all. And we worship the work of our own hands. And God says, "That's why I bring vandalism...that's why I bring vandalism. Because you haven't got the answer, and you need to get back to me."

Now by this stage, Jeremiah listening must have been in quite a state. Dismay was on his face; his jaw must have dropped---that this was what he was to tell to the nations. And God noticed the look on his face and said, "Now Jeremiah, don't you be dismayed... don't you be dismayed." That tells me what he was looking like. "Jeremiah, get up, get dressed, go and tell them." "Me?" And if he felt a little uncertain when the call came, how do you think he felt now that he knew what he had to say? He must have felt exactly like Samuel during the night. You know the story of Samuel...little boy? He too had a call from God so real that he thought it was Eli in the next room. We had a visit from a Jew from Jerusalem three days ago in this building called *'Eli'*, told me his name was *'Ellie'*. We should pronounce it that way, by the way. And remember, little Samuel? Took me back this week to Samuel's call and he said, *"All right Lord, here am I. Speak, your servant hears."* Now that is where we always stop in our sermons...in our readings. We don't go on to read. But the next thing is, "Samuel, you've got to go and tell the nation and tell Eli---you've got to tell them these terrible things." And when Samuel woke up in the morning, he just couldn't bring himself to tell Eli what he'd been told. It was so terrible. And Eli said, "Now come on Samuel, you've got to tell me what the Lord told you; you've got to tell me." And the boy had to get it out.

And now Jeremiah, having received this in the night, wakes up and gets up in the morning. God says, "Now get dressed, go and tell them." "What! Tell them ***this***?" It's nice being a messenger of good news, but to take bad news to people...who likes to do that? And to take bad news to people who won't believe it and don't want it...to people who hate you for telling them what's true---that's even worse.

***Jeremiah’s Call: Note 3) Protection/Omnipresence***

And so, we come to the ***THIRD*** and last note, **PROTECTION**. Divine omnipresence. "Jeremiah, if you are dismayed over this, I will dismay you in front of them. The very thing you fear will come to pass. You'll be a fool." And here's a profound thing, if we are afraid of people, God will make us a fool in front of them. Jesus said, *"Whoever's ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of him."* God can be ashamed of people, and if He's ashamed of people, he'll leave them to be a fool---to be a disgrace, to look a clown in the eyes of the world. And those who go dismayed will be dismayed by God.

In this way, God seeks to pull Jeremiah together firmly, in a tough way, to get his morale together---like every army trainer has got to be tough. God says, "Now pull yourself together, Jeremiah, don't look so dismayed. You'll look a fool. I'll make you a fool in front of them if you're dismayed. Don't you fear them; you fear ***ME***." And then more tenderly, God says, "I can make you a fortress. Jeremiah, you must choose. You'll either be a ***FOOL*** or a ***FORTRESS***; and I'll make you both, or either." "If you are ashamed, if you're embarrassed, if you are afraid, if you are dismayed, I'll make you a fool in front of them. But if you'll go and tell them what I've told you, if you'll go where I send you, and without fear or favor you will tell them the truth, then *I'll make you like a fortified city with iron pillars and bronze walls."*

Now notice the honesty of God. He didn't say, "I will keep you out of trouble." He said, "I'll ***PROTECT*** you in it. They will attack you. The princes will be against you. The priests will be against you. The people will be against you. Even your own family will be against you. Don't worry; you'll have walls of bronze around you. Why? Because I'll be with you." And one plus God is always a majority. "And I'll be with you if you'll go." So, he offers protection.

Jeremiah had to learn that God can be ***ASHAMED*** of his servants. He also had to learn that God will be ***ALONGSIDE*** his servants, to deliver them. And God will either disgrace us in other people's eyes if we do not do what he tells us. Or he will deliver us if we do. And the fact is, God kept his word. Even though Jeremiah was put in prison, even though his life was threatened, though he was thrown into pit, though he was pushed around---the fact is, that when the nation was taken off in chains, Jeremiah was left free. God kept his word to Jeremiah, "I will deliver you. You will never be made to look a fool." And the fact is, Jeremiah comes down to us today, not as a fool, but a ***FORTRESS***, as a great hero.

Well, the time has come to finish, but just a moment. Are you saying already, "Well that's all very interesting. I've learned a few thoughts, by the way, but what has this got to do with me? Thank God, He didn't call ***ME*** to be a prophet." Did He not? Did He not? Way back in the earliest days---pages---of the Old Testament, somebody came to Moses and said, *"Moses, there are two people at the other side of camp prophesying, and you are the official prophet, Moses."* And Moses said, *"I don't mind those two prophesying. I wish that* ***ALL*** *God's people were prophets."*

And that wish of Moses was taken up centuries later by a prophet called JOEL who said, *"'It will come to pass in the last days,'* says God, *'I will pour out my spirit on* ***ALL*** *flesh and regardless of age, sex or class, they will prophesy.'"* And in the New Testament, Peter stood up and said, *"This is ‘that’.* ***ALL*** *of God's people have given their mouths to God and now God can speak through them."* And Paul was later to write to the people of God at Corinth, *"I would that you* ***ALL*** *spoke in tongues, and even more, that you* ***ALL*** *prophesied. I would that God had your mouth. I just wish you'd give them to him...even tongues, that would be a step forward because then he has your mouth; but it doesn't help anybody else. It edifies you, but it's in a language others don't understand. So, even more, I want you to go on so that you become the mouthpiece of God---so that you can speak the word of God to people in their own language and thus become God's mouthpieces."*

You've heard many sermons on *'the priesthood of all believers'* I'm sure, but I believe in the ***PROPHETHOOD*** of all believers...the prophethood of all believers. God now does not want a people like Israel in which only 40 were prophets. He wants a new people---his church---in which ***ALL*** the Lord's people are prophets, and he has my mouth and your mouth so that at any time, if he tells you to go somewhere and to say something, he can use you. And therefore, Jeremiah's call is most relevant. You must not, with human impetuosity, rush off and think you have God's word when you haven't. But when God unmistakably tells you, "I want you to go and say," then you have no choice except to rebel or submit.

**We are *ALL* called to be prophets**. We shall be made fools in the sight of the world, unless we grasp firmly that God ***PREDESTINED*** us to such a ministry. That God ***PREDICTS*** what will happen, that God ***PROTECTS*** those who go out in His name and are faithful.

Let us pray. "Holy Father, you've already got our mouths in praise--- we've been singing to you this morning. We ask that you may have our mouths in every way that you require. We ask that you bring us to the point where we are willing to have your words on our lips, and to do this without fear or favor....to know that you will be with us as we speak. Oh Lord God, would that all your people were prophets. Amen."

**DAVID**: Adrian, do you have something in your pocket?

**ADRIAN**: I might have, if it doesn't go off.

**DAVID**: Yeah, just show them that

**ADRIAN**: Any doctors amongst you'll know what that is. It's a little bleep and it sort of goes, “*Bleep, bleep, bleep*,” when you're on call. There we are, and that really is what Jeremiah wanted the people to be...just as ready to respond to a call as I'm supposed to be ready to respond to that. Only one hopes one's ready ALL the time, not as I was now…I didn't want to be called out the last two minutes.

**DAVID**: It only just struck me that moment, that Adrian is a living example of what it is, not just to be ***CALLED*** but to be ***ON CALL***.