



Let's Consider . . .

From Sorrow To Success

Have you ever been so down in the dumps that you felt like the Prophet Jeremiah and questioned - - why did I ever come forth from the womb to see labor and sorrow so that my days are spent in shame? (Jer 20:18) Jeremiah's initial problem was doubt.

When you think you've have it bad consider:

- He endured persecution because of his stand 15:15
- He was beaten and placed in stocks (even though he committed no crime, he only told the truth) 20:2
- His friends tagged him with a nickname, Magor-Missabib which means terror on every side.
- Threatened with death by the priests and prophets 26:11
- Thrown in prison 32:2
- Accused of being a traitor 38:4
- Thrown into a cistern (a dungeon full of mire) 38:6
- Taken to Egypt against his will 43:7

He was rejected by

- His family 12:6
- Neighbors 11:19-21
- Prophets & priests 20:1,2 28:1-17
- Friends 20:10
- Audience 26:8
- Kings 36:23

Although our problems may not seem as threatening as Jeremiah's were, still our problems are important and distressing and may overwhelm us as just much as Jeremiah's overwhelmed him. When times seem hard remember John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Today we measure success by how well we achieve our goals, how much money we acquire or by how much fame, prestige and power we have. Compared to today's standards, Jeremiah was a failure. He was a prophet to Judah and when he spoke, it seemed no one listened.

But in God's eyes, Jeremiah was a success – so how can that be? God measures success by obedience (to his calling) and faithfulness (didn't give up under pressure). Regardless of the cost personally and physically, Jeremiah proclaimed the word of God.

Jeremiah the person –

His name means The Lord exalts or the Lord establishes.

He lived in Anathoth, northeast of Jerusalem. He was the son of Hilkiyah the priest.

He was the prophet to Judah in the late seventh and early sixth centuries.

He was known as the weeping prophet.

He prophesied under 5 kings: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah.

Society at this time was deteriorating both economically and politically and spiritually. Babylon, Egypt and Assyria were battling for dominance. There were wars and captivity and at times God's word seemed offensive.

Jeremiah's message was repent and turn back to God, or be punished.

The nation was heading toward destruction and if they did not change their ways they would be heading toward captivity (which occurred by Babylon in 586 BC.)

Jeremiah was called - - God had a purpose for him.

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. Jer 1:5 If God gives us a task or talent, we should fulfill it completely and cheerfully. If God does not provide a particular talent, then we should fulfill the task given common to all believers: to love God and others and to serve God and others.

Jeremiah lacked self confidence and felt inadequate to the task being asked of him.

Jer 1:6-10 We should never allow feelings of inadequacy keep us from fulfilling what God asks of us. When God gives us a task to do, He will provide what we need to accomplish the task. (The word of the Lord came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied. The Lord said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.") When faced with a difficult task, remember God assured Jeremiah he would rescue him, not keep trouble from occurring. God will not keep storms away, but He will help us see them through.

Jeremiah endured.

His audience was often apathetic and sometimes antagonistic yet through all that happened to him, Jeremiah did not give up, although there were many times I expect he wanted to.

Many people in the Bible endured through the hard times (Job, Elijah, Daniel, John the Baptist, for just a few) having doubts and feeling desperate; their spirituality was not always easy. But we all have bad times, problems, feel sad, experience illness, suffer losses, have trials and tribulations but Paul says: 'For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.' (Romans 15:4). These things were written to teach the mind and encourage the heart.

Knowing this we should seek out resources to help us through the tough times knowing our Father will not give us more than we can handle.