

Keeping the Church Alive #1
Will you stand?
By Russell Earl

In Jeremiah 20:7-8, the discouraged and downhearted prophet prayed to his Heavenly Master. The Lord had encouraged him to become a prophet in earlier times. Unsure at first, he later came into the prophetic position with confidence of heart and soul. Yet, it seemed by doing such work he only brought daily ridicule and continuous scoffing upon himself. He was nothing more than a fool to those he sought to teach.

Jeremiah was not lifeless in his message. He delivered it in a energetic, fervent style with the fury of a passionate prophet on fire for the Lord. The great unpopularity of his message caused him to be viewed as a hindrance by others, just as men of Gods word are often viewed today.

Continue to read to verse nine you'll see that at this point the prophet felt that he wanted to return to his private way of life. If he did follow through with such an action he would no longer speak the words with which the heavenly father entrusted him! This was something that he would realize was easier said than done. God's word was not an ineffective force in his life. It was the opposite; God's word was as Jeremiah says (Jeremiah 20:9) "a burning fire shut up in my bones". He realized he could no longer restrain it. The words he was given had to be spoken! They had to break out from his heart, for the word of God would not allow him to stop the saving message.

We see how the attitude and frame of mind of the prophet changes in the verses to follow. The insulting plans and the vicious strategies of his declared adversaries no longer frightened him. No longer are his enemies just hateful in the verbal sense; now they are out to annihilate him. We see in v.10 how in their cruel circles they encouraged each other to keep an evil eye of study upon him.

His familiar friends were against him and sought to destroy him "All my familiars watched for my halting"! (Jeremiah 20:10) His friends spoke well of him to his face but, when his back was turned they thrust daggers into it as they impatiently waited his stumbling. We too find ourselves of similar situations. We are persecuted, laughed at, spoken against and betrayed just as Jeremiah was; just as Christ was!

In v.11 we read of his trust in the rock that is our Lord, "But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one" (Jeremiah 20:11). We too should look to the Lord, our rock of salvation and "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). We see how God is protected the assaulted Prophet. His vengeance brought on Jeremiah's enemies would be a fearful weight for them.

So the question here is this: when we are being spoken badly of, laughed at, made into a laughing stock, what will our reaction be? What will your reaction be? Will your reaction be as Jeremiah's? Will it be of fierce dedication that couldn't be shaken, or will we be beaten down like gravel on a pathway?

Will you stand strong on Gods word, believing and knowing that if you do so he will deliver us from such enemies and that they will reap what they sow. For this writer, when these words are read they are ones of great encouragement. We see how God word can cause a burning fire, one that cannot be held in, one that must be preached no matter the outcome, one that must be taught no matter the opinions of others. We see the protection

that God provides to the faithful. Did he say we wouldn't be attacked? No, "As sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt 10:16), we are sent to preach the gospel. If we are faithful and do the will of the father, we will receive our reward of eternal life with Him. So how will you stand? Will you be able to stand as Jeremiah did, or "will you also go away" (Jn 6:67)?