

## Compelled to Continue

Jeremiah 20:9

The life and ministry of Jeremiah was interesting to say the least. He is commonly known as the “Weeping Prophet,” and for good reason. His ministry spanned forty years in Judah, leading up to their captivity at the hands of the Babylonians. During his faithful ministry, Jeremiah was the lone voice of truth and righteousness among a people who had no desire for righteousness.

While Jeremiah remained faithful to his calling, his efforts appeared to be of little value or benefit. After forty years of ministry, he failed to secure one convert to truth and righteousness. (How many today would continue forty weeks, much less forty years with no tangible results to show for their efforts?) Rather than being encouraged and followed in righteousness, Jeremiah faced extreme opposition and difficulty. He was impoverished, imprisoned, ridiculed, and even cast into a muddy cistern to die, all at the hands of his countrymen. Such treatment was Judah’s response and compensation for their national pastor. (At the time of our text, Jeremiah had been faithfully proclaiming the truth of God to a rebellious people for approximately thirty years.)

While we are not prophets, called to warn a rebellious people of judgment to come, I am sure we have all experienced seasons in life when we could relate to Jeremiah’s feelings. As we strive to serve the Lord and live for Him, we face opposition, often from those we least expect. If you have served the Lord for any length of time, you have likely been tempted to abandon the work, questioning if the effort was really worth it. If you are walking in a valley of doubt and despair, I hope the message today will bring the comfort and encouragement you need to continue for the Lord. Let’s consider these [particular aspects](#) in the life of Jeremiah as we think on the thought: [Compelled to Continue](#).

**I. The Reflection of Jeremiah** (9a) – [Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name](#). As Jeremiah reflected on nearly thirty years of ministry, faithfully serving the Lord, this is the attitude he possessed at that moment in life. He was at the bottom of the barrel, so to speak, and felt as if he could not go on another day. This statement represents emotions that many of us have felt at one point or another. We may not have verbalized them as Jeremiah did, but we have felt the heaviness of despair and questioned our ability to move on. As we consider where Jeremiah was at this moment we discover:

**A. He felt Deceived** (7a) – [O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived](#): These are clearly strong words, but they are spoken from a heart of honesty before the Lord. God already knew how Jeremiah felt and he just verbalized his feelings unto the Lord. He honestly felt as if he had been deceived by the Lord. He revealed his displeasure with his current situation. He felt as if the Lord

had not revealed unto him the great difficulty he would face. He had hoped for better success, and yet he faced one defeat after another. He was saying, “Lord, why have you brought me to this place; this is not what I expected when you spoke to me about preaching unto the people. This is not what I signed up for.”

- The majority of us have been in a similar situation haven't we? We have questioned why things turned out as they did. We may not like to admit it, but we have even blamed God and accused Him of failing to provide full disclosure about our situation. Had we known then what we know now, we may not have agreed to follow. We felt deceived and despondent.

**B. He felt Discouraged** (7b) – *thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed*. It appears Jeremiah viewed this as a test of his faith, an examination of his performance, and he hadn't measured up. He felt as if he had struggled with the Lord, instead of those who refused to heed his message, and the Lord had prevailed. Jeremiah felt God had challenged him in a test of endurance and he was unable to meet the expectations. At this moment in his life, he was quite discouraged.

- It is easy for us to look on this situation and question the response of Jeremiah. How could he possibly think such thoughts? How could he fail to see that his struggle was not with God, but with those who failed to listen to His message? This was a spiritual struggle for the hearts of men, not a problem created by God. That is one of the oldest tactics employed by the enemy. He loves to cause us to view our struggles from the wrong perspective. Just as it was with Jeremiah, God is never the problem, but Satan wants us to feel as if God takes pleasure in our defeats. He loves to create a heart of discouragement and discontentment in our lives. If the enemy can divert our attention from the real struggle we face, he can hinder our victory and keep us discouraged.

**C. He felt Despised** (7c) – *I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me*. This likely wasn't far from reality, but I am sure the devil had exaggerated it within the heart of Jeremiah. He was in derision – *feeling ridiculed and ashamed*. He felt as if everyone in Judah was mocking him and no one cared. He felt alone in the great struggle he was facing.

- Again, this is another favorite tactic of the enemy. He wants us to believe that no one cares for us or has any concern for the difficulties we face. He would have us believe that our faith is obsolete and no one is interested in the ways of righteousness anymore. He wants us to feel the loneliness of despair and succumb to the temptation of abandoning our faith. Have we not all felt like saying, “Why should I care; no one else does? What would it matter if I quit, I'm not making an impact anyway?”

**D. He felt Defeated** (9a) – *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name.*

This summarizes the way Jeremiah felt at this moment. He had decided to abandon the work and walk away. “Lord I am through; I can’t go on another day. I will not speak your name to another individual. I will never preach again.”

- The particular aspects of ministry varies with individuals, but we too must resist the urge to succumb to defeat. We’ve been there haven’t we? “Lord, I can’t do this anymore; I’ve tried, but it isn’t working, and they aren’t listening. I am finished; I am going to abandon the work and cease to speak about it.” While those attitudes aren’t pleasing to the Lord, He does provide strength and guidance for those who seek Him. Thankfully there is more to [Verse 9](#) than what we have considered thus far.

**II. The Resolve of Jeremiah** (9b) – *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.* While Jeremiah may have wanted to abandon his calling, there was something within that refused to let him do such a thing. Consider:

**A. The Presence of the Word** – He may have wanted to quit, but the Word of God was within his heart, guiding his life and compelling him to press on for the Lord. As much as his flesh wanted to quit, the Word was abiding within. When he contemplated quitting, the Word would come to mind. As he stewed in his desperation, the Word began to rise within his heart. He simply could not escape the Word and the real presence of the Lord.

- It is impossible for the believer to fully escape any reminder of the Word, and we certainly can’t escape the presence of the Lord. When we are tempted to quit, God’s Word offers strength and encouragement to press on. In my moments of desperation, the Spirit whispers peace to my hurting soul. There is One who abides within that compels me to press on in the faith!

**B. His Passion for the Word** – *But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones.*

Jeremiah had convinced himself to abandon his preaching, but he had not consulted the Lord or figured on the power of the Word. When he thought he could suppress his desire for the Lord and preaching the Word, it grew like a raging fire shut up within his bones!

- When we encounter the risen Christ in salvation, our lives are completely transformed, never to be the same again. We may make a conscious decision to abandon our faith, but it is much easier to convince ourselves to try such an effort than it is to actually carry out such action.

We cannot escape the guidance and conviction of the Spirit. Those called of God to proclaim the Gospel will always have a desire to do so. Those saved by grace have a burning fire within that we are unable to put out. It is always there in those quiet moments of meditation, urging our pursuit of the Lord and His righteousness!

**C. The Power in the Word** – *But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing.* Jeremiah soon learned it was easier to deal with the rebellious Jews than it was to argue with God. The Lord would not abandon him in the way and allow him to forsake his calling. When he laid down at night, the Word was there, spoken to his heart through the Spirit. When he woke in the morning, the Word remained. He could not escape the presence and power of God. Eventually he decided it was a futile effort, and he could no longer resist.

- I am glad our Lord promised to never leave or forsake us. He will never abandon us in the journey, even when we think that is what we want. We may desire to walk away from the Lord, but His presence is ever near. The Spirit will not give up on those who are in Christ. You can expect the Spirit to trouble your heart, drawing you toward the Lord, even if you desire to walk away. It is much easier to deal with the presumed struggles we face than a persistent, righteous God pursuing us with His loving grace!

**D. His Pursuit through the Word** – *But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.* Finally Jeremiah gave in to the leading of the Lord and determined to press on for the Lord. He had endured his moment of weakness and despair, but decided, by the help of the Lord, to continue serving the Lord. The love and pursuit of God persuaded him to preach another message for the Lord.

- I don't say this in arrogance, but I hope you understand that if the Lord is pursuing you, He will prevail. The enemy can plant seeds of doubt, but our Lord is more than able to overcome. It is much easier if we submit as Jeremiah did, sooner than later. There is no reason for us to live defeated lives. Jesus already overcame everything that could possibly hinder. He has defeated sin, Satan, hell, and death. We are more than conquerors through Him. If you are contemplating giving up on the Lord, I pray He will ignite a fire within your heart this very moment that will compel you to continue!

**Conclusion:** I have shared the message the Lord gave me. It is now up to you to respond. Are you struggling like Jeremiah was, contemplating giving up and walking away? Have you convinced yourself it isn't worth it? Could I urge you to look to Jesus by faith? Come before Him in faith, knowing He is able to provide for your need. If you are unsaved, respond in faith today!