



THE MAN WHO HAD FIRE IN HIS BONES (Sermon)

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Jim Zackrison

Text: Jeremiah 20:9: “But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.”

Sermon Proposition: “The message takes the person before the person takes the message!”

Sermon Outline

Introduction: The evangelistic meeting that failed

- I. A Prophet in a Dangerous Situation (Jeremiah 20)
- II. A Frustrated Prophet (Jeremiah 20:7-9)
- III. Fire in His Bones (Jeremiah 20:9)

Conclusion: That same fire can—and should—burn in all our bones

Introduction

Once upon a time, some of the leading members of a small church decided to hold a member-led evangelistic campaign in an unentered area of the island where they lived. They rented a small house with only two rooms. They got permission to take down the dividing wall, provided they would put it up again when the lease expired.

They built some rustic benches, installed a platform, put up a tightly-stretched bed sheet for a projection screen, built a flannel board to use for illustrations, printed and distributed handbills — and waited for the opening night!

Opening night came, but no one showed up inside the building. “Now what?” was the question! They decided to hold the meeting anyway. They sang, greeted themselves, a quartet of young men sang, and the speaker of the evening preached.

The meetings went on for three weeks, and not one person from the village ever entered the house, because the local priest had threatened everyone with drastic spiritual discipline if they

dared to attend the meetings! After the meetings ended, the members went home discouraged and frustrated.

But that's not the end, and before we finish today, you will hear the rest of the story!

I. A Prophet in a Dangerous Situation (Jeremiah 20)

1. Jeremiah ran into trouble with a presiding priest named Pashhur. He didn't like what Jeremiah had just said; "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Listen! I am going to bring on this city and all the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words'" (Jeremiah 19:15).
2. Pashhur places Jeremiah under arrest. "He had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin at the Lord's temple" (Jeremiah 20:2).
3. Jeremiah's new prophecy against Pashhur himself: "God has a new name for you: not Pashhur but Danger-Everywhere, because God says, 'You're a danger to yourself and everyone around you. All your friends are going to get killed in battle while you stand there and watch'" (Jeremiah 20: 3-4, MSG).*

II. A Frustrated Prophet (Jeremiah 20:7-9)

1. Time to quit! Jeremiah has had enough!
 - "You pushed me into this, God, and I let you do it" (Jeremiah 20:7, MSG).
 - In Jeremiah 1:19, the Lord told him, "'They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the Lord." Jeremiah feels that this has not happened, that he has not been rescued.
 - Persecution and resistance are usually the results of his messages. "I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long" (Jeremiah 20:7-8).
2. Do you feel like it is time to quit? Do you feel like you have had enough?
 - a. Family is opposed.
 - b. People at work call you a religious fanatic!
 - c. Your former friends just laugh. "Old friends watch, hoping I'll fall flat on my face: 'One misstep and we'll have him. We'll get rid of him for good!'" (Jeremiah 20:10, MSG).

*The *Message Bible* is used by the author in a number places, as noted, because of its contemporary phrases. All other Bible texts are New International Version (NIV), unless otherwise indicated.

- d. The last three people you gave Bible studies to did not join the church. Seems like a waste of time.
3. A significant Ellen G. White statement: “All who profess to be children of God should bear in mind that as missionaries they will be brought into contact with all classes of minds. There are the refined and the coarse, the humble and the proud, the religious and the skeptical, the educated and the ignorant, the rich and the poor. These varied minds cannot be treated alike; yet all need kindness and sympathy. By mutual contact our minds should receive polish and refinement. We are dependent upon one another, closely bound together by the ties of human brotherhood, (*Ministry of Healing*, pp. 495-496).
4. BUT something inside Jeremiah kept him going.
 - “*But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot*” (Jeremiah 20:9).
 - Ellen G. White counsel: “It is through the social relations that Christianity comes in contact with the world. Every man or woman who has received the divine illumination is to shed light on the dark pathway of those who are unacquainted with the better way. Social power, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, must be improved in bringing souls to the Saviour. Christ is not to be hid away in the heart as a coveted treasure, sacred and sweet, to be enjoyed solely by the possessor. We are to have Christ in us as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life, refreshing all who come in contact with us” (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 496).

III. Fire in His Bones

1. “*But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot*” (Jeremiah 20:9).
2. The message takes the person before the person takes the message.
 - Jesus said this would happen – “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” (Luke 12:49). Just before that, Jesus said: “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48).
 - The message must go to the world. “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people” (Revelation 14:6). The angel says so “with a loud voice,” while “flying” (urgency).
 - To Jeremiah, it was like “The words are fire in my belly, a burning in my bones. I’m worn out trying to hold it in. I can’t do it any longer!” (Jeremiah 20:9, MSG).

3. What is the fire?

- First - The “fire” is the Holy Spirit. When the disciples began preaching on the Day of Pentecost, the report says, “Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks” (Acts 2:4, MSG).
- Second – A “fire” — religious experience and evangelistic zeal — ingrained in a person by the Holy Spirit. “I [John the Baptist – or any of us] baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me [Jesus] is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*” (Matthew 3:11, ESV).
- Third – The “fire in the bones” comes from the Holy Spirit. See Acts 19:1-6 for the experience of some of the disciples of John the Baptist and their experiences with baptism of the Holy Spirit and with fire. As soon as Paul baptized them, they received their assigned spiritual gifts and went to work!
- Fourth – An example. Before you make a visit, pray and ask God to go with you. Ask for the Holy Spirit to prepare the person you will visit, as well as yourself. Ask for wisdom, sensitivity, the removal of the fear to visit, and God’s presence to be with you. Trust the Lord to help you make the visit. Have a smile on your face and be a friend, which is what matters most! Enjoy!

4. Paul’s fire in his bones: “For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16-17).

5. Illustration. In the late 1200s, there was a man in Spain named Ramon Llull. He was a troubadour, a court musician, and far from anything religious. According to his writings, Ramon Llull had a vision while composing a nonsense song: “He looked to his right and saw our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, as if suspended in mid-air.”

The vision changed his life. He became a missionary with three intentions:

- To die in the service of God while converting Muslims to Christianity.
- To see to the founding of religious institutions that would teach foreign languages.
- To write a book on how to overcome someone’s objections to being converted.

Ramon Llull urged the study of Arabic and other little-studied languages in Europe at that time for the purpose of converting Muslims to Christianity. He travelled through Europe trying to establish special colleges to prepare future missionaries.

He made many trips to Muslim countries in North Africa. During his last trip, at the age of 82, he was stoned and barely escaped. The wounds from this encounter resulted in his death.

The point is that Llull was determined to convert Muslims and Jews to Christianity. There was an evangelistic fire burning in him that never went out.

Conclusion

So what happened to the unsuccessful evangelistic campaign? The pastor at the time was called to minister somewhere else. The house, with a new divider installed, went back to the owner. And the leaders of the campaign went back to work. A fire burned, and they never gave up!

Years later, the former pastor visited the island. The leader, who had been the head elder at the time, took him to see the little house and tour the area. “We never gave up,” the elder said. “We visited, we studied with people, we just kept at it.” He took the former pastor to see three new church buildings housing nearly 1,000 members. Many of the current members were people who had not entered the little house during those earlier evangelistic meetings but had been outside in the dark, listening through the windows! Even a priest of an area parish himself became a Seventh-day Adventist!

Fire in his bones!! The same evangelistic fire can inflame your bones under the blessing and direction of the Holy Spirit.