



THE MAN WHO HAD FIRE IN HIS BONES (Sermon)

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Key Text: “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 (NIV).

Purpose: The message must take the person before the person can take the message.

Introduction

The person ready to speak was a nobody! His suit was anything but up to date. His shoes, a pair of well-worn sandals, had seen better days. The Bible he had in his hands was old and in bad shape. Why would the conference Personal Ministries director want this man to speak at a training congress?

But when he stood and began to tell his story, the entire audience was on the edge of their seats! What did he do that caused a stir? (We will come back to him later).

I. Having a Message is Important

As a class assignment a student once interviewed a successful non-Adventist pastor. This pastor once had no church, only a small group that met in his home. By the time of the interview, he had a church of some 20,000 members housed on a former university campus. The student asked how he accomplished this. His answer was unique. “Before, I had no special message to communicate. Then I discovered something. I discovered a message. Since I discovered that message, everything took off.” As Seventh-day Adventists we would not agree with the “message” he discovered, but what he does teach us is that the message is all-important.

- As Seventh-day Adventists we have a message to deliver. But we must know what the message is. We must know how to deliver it correctly, and we ourselves must believe it. Otherwise, it becomes just words with no real meaning.
- There is an incident in the Bible about a man who insisted on delivering a message, even though he didn’t know what he was talking about.
- He had no authentic message to deliver, but he insisted on delivering something he knew nothing about.

- A. Running with no message (2 Samuel 15).
 - A son of the high priest named Ahimaaz was recruited as a spy for King David during the Absalom rebellion (2 Samuel 15:27, 28).
 - Ahimaaz and his companion spy were discovered, hidden in a well, and eventually escaped (2 Samuel 17:17-20).
- B. Zeal without a message is just as damaging as a message without zeal!
 - Proverbs 19:2 – “Enthusiasm without knowledge is not good; impatience will get you into trouble” (Good News Translation).
 - Ahimaaz had no good news to communicate. Joab, the commanding general, sent a “Cushite,” apparently a hired mercenary, with the message of Absalom’s death. Ahimaaz still insisted on “running” (2 Samuel 18:22, 23).
- C. “Running” without a message accomplishes nothing.
 - 2 Samuel 18:26 – David assumed that the single messenger he saw in the distance meant good news.
 - Ahimaaz not only had no good news; he had **no** news. As a result, he is simply pushed aside (2 Samuel 18:30).
 - Paul (Romans 10:2, NIV) – “For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.”
 - Ahimaaz was a good man — a good church member — but because (in this case) he had no foundation for his actions he accomplished nothing.

II. Running with a Message (Jeremiah 20)

Running with a message is not always easy. Sometimes it is not even a pleasant experience. But it is always important!

- The angels delivering the three angel’s messages in Revelation 14 do even better — they fly! That shows the urgency of getting the message out.

The prophet Jeremiah ran into a serious problem delivering his message.

- The experience he went through brought on a bout of discouragement, but it also caused him to recognize something he didn’t know was in his “bones” — something that was an integral part of his very being.

A. Jeremiah 20:1-6 – Jeremiah’s conflict with an apostate priest named Pashhur.

- Jeremiah has a message directly from the Lord, so the message is authentic.
- Pashhur beats Jeremiah up and puts him in stocks overnight at the entrance to the Temple.
- Jeremiah gets a new message from the Lord directed to Pashhur - (Jeremiah 20:3-6).

B. Jeremiah gets discouraged. (Jeremiah 20:7-18).

1. Calls into question God’s choice in giving him a tough message and a hard job.
2. Not really that happy with the message he must communicate.

III. The Message Takes the Person

- A. Jeremiah 20:9 (NIV) - “**But** if I say, “I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name.” Despite his tough job, despite an unpopular message,

despite his discouragement, there is something in Jeremiah's soul that will not let him quit!

Key verse – Jeremiah 20:9 (NIV). “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.”

When the message takes the person, the person takes the message!

- The message “burns” in the person's heart.
- The message is ingrained in the person's “bones.” It becomes part of one's being.
- One can try to “quit,” to “let someone else do it,” to find any excuse that seems plausible, but the message still “burns” and the person's conscience says, “I am weary of holding it in.”

So, back to our insignificant brother.

It turns out he had a message “burning” in his heart. Here is his story.

“My business,” he reported, “is that I have a small stand in front of the city hospital. I sell all kinds of items that people want — Band Aids, herbs, pencils, etc. I heard the pastor say that we should find someplace where there are no Adventists, so I found a village about two hours away by bus that has no Adventists. I go there every Wednesday. I have dedicated half of the proceeds of what I sell at my stand to this project.

“On Wednesdays I visit from door to door with literature and Bible study enrollment cards. I have a small group Bible study going. I stay in the village until the last bus back to the city leaves.

“I also heard the pastor say that we should take the Advent message to pastors of other churches. So, I have visited all the pastors of Protestant churches in the village, and I am studying with some of them.”

“But,” he said, “I really need some help. I have 30 people ready for baptism, and two of the pastors want to become Adventists. One of them has convinced most of his congregation to keep the Sabbath.”

Conclusion

No more needs to be said. Socially insignificant this brother may have been, but he was far from insignificant to the Lord. He is a shining example of what evangelistic fire in one's bones is all about. He and Jeremiah would have gotten along well together!

So, are your bones on fire?