



IT'S GOD
CALLING



WEEK THREE: JOSHUA AND JEREMIAH

It would be hard to find another man in the Bible, about whom everything written was positive and encouraging but this is the case with Joshua. His name means “*Jahweh saves*”. He is described as faithful, obedient, and humble. We remember him as one of the twelve spies whom Moses sent into the land of Canaan when only he and Caleb came back with a positive report. He was a great supporter of Moses, someone who could be relied upon to fulfil any task given to him.

He was of course, born into slavery in Egypt and would have experienced all the terrible hardships that the Israelites had to bear.

During the wilderness journey Joshua led the fight against the Amalekites in the battle when Moses stood on the mountain, his arms supported by Aaron and Hur, until they achieved victory. (*Exodus 17:8-16*) He was also the one who accompanied Moses up the mountain when Moses received the Ten Commandments. Moses appointed him to guard the Tent of Meeting when Moses went inside to meet with God.

- What do these things tell us about Joshua?
- How is he an example to us?

Deuteronomy 31:7-8 “Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

Read Joshua 1:1-9

Joshua had already been designated by Moses as the new leader of the Israelites, but God spoke directly to him after the death of Moses as he stepped into this role.

- Which verse, for you, is the outstanding one in this passage?
- What did God promise Joshua when he called him to be the leader of Israel?
- Do you think Joshua may have been overwhelmed by this call?
- Notice that three times in this passage, and in the one from Deuteronomy, Joshua is told to be strong and have courage. Perhaps God is also saying this to us?

If you read through the book of Joshua, you will realise how many miracles God performed as Joshua obeyed his instructions, taking the Children of Israel over the River Jordan and into the Promised Land. We read about the way the land was divided up amongst the tribes and how Caleb, who went as one of the 'spies', was rewarded by being given the land of Hebron.

Read Jeremiah 1

The times in which he lived, and the circumstances of his life, could not for Jeremiah, have been more different from those of Joshua. The Old Testament Timeline and Bible Timeline attached to this study may help you to understand the time context.

Many of the kings had been evil men who did everything but worship the true God, encouraging the people to worship idols and become involved in terrible practices such as putting their children to death by fire.

Jeremiah began his ministry in the reign of Josiah, a good king who temporarily delayed God's promised judgement, given because of the terrible rule of Manasseh. Josiah had instigated reform which included the destruction of pagan high places, but it had no lasting effect on the people.

In 609 B.C. whilst attempting to prevent Pharaoh Necho from helping the Assyrian remnant, Josiah was killed at Megiddo. His sons and grandson who followed him to the throne caused Jeremiah to understand the folly of the political policy rulers and warned them of God's plan for Judah. These kings allowed Jeremiah's enemies to mistreat and imprison him.

- What did God tell Jeremiah about his calling?
- Jeremiah immediately responded in a way which in effect told God he didn't know what he was doing. What was his excuse?
- Have we offered similar excuses when God asked us to do something for him? Many of us cannot use the excuse of being too young, but have we said we were too old?

When God calls someone to do a particular task, he knows what he is doing. *Hebrews 13:20-21 "Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"*

When God calls us, it doesn't mean it's going to be easy. Jeremiah was imprisoned, despised, and abused. He was ignored and mistreated and frequently told God that the people wouldn't listen to anything he had to say. Jeremiah was beaten, put in stocks, placed in a muddy cistern where he could easily have sunk into the mud, to name but a few of his trials. But Jeremiah endured and repeatedly continued to give God's message.

What was Jeremiah's example?

- Though he was before Jesus, he exemplified Christ.
- He endured sufferings and insults.
- He kept preaching to 'deaf' people.

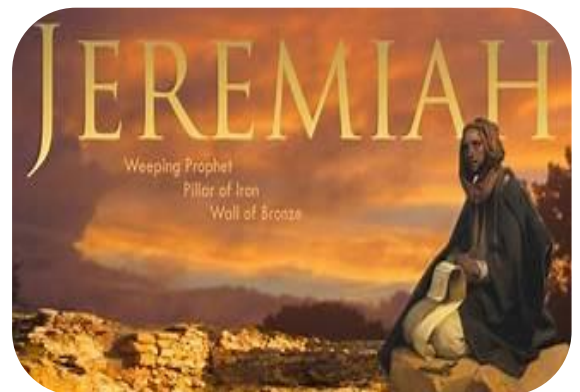
And if he could do it, then so can we.

"Thus says the LORD, 'Stand by the ways and see; and ask for the ancient paths, where is the good way, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls.' But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" (Jeremiah 6:16).

So, let's be attuned to listen to God. We need to take time to hear what he has to say. It maybe through the scriptures, it maybe through a sermon, it maybe by a comment someone makes, it may be in a still small voice.

It may encourage us to learn that wonderful verse in Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."



Prayer:

Heavenly Father, help us to learn from those in the past who walked in your calling. May we keep close to you and listen for your voice.