

**JEREMIAH: SHINING AS SPIRITUAL TWILIGHT FALLS**  
**"Part I: Handling Low Esteem Caused By Sin's Abusive Relationships"**  
**(Jeremiah 1:1-19)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

(1) The issue of "low self-esteem" is critical today because there is much serious, damaging abuse occurring at even the local level:

(a) The shootings at Columbine High and elsewhere all seem to arise from those who have come to feel bad about themselves because of being mistreated by their peers!

(b) This past week, a convicted felon was released from prison after serving 6 years of a 15-year prison term for raping a seventy year old woman. He immediately grabbed a butcher knife, and broke into that now seventy-six year old woman's home, yelling, "I'm going to get you again for putting me in prison!" He repeated his original crime against her before being captured. The woman is now getting crisis counseling.

Respond to this "low self-esteem" caused by abuse or other sources is being seriously debated among *Christians*:

You're Something Special has stated: "Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for **self-love** and **self-esteem**. This is a good and necessary focus." (cited in Dave Hunt's newsletter, The Berean Call, July 1999, p. 3) In other words, this Christian psychologist advocates loving one's self and building up himself to view himself as of greater intrinsic worth.

Berean Call newsletter (October 1999) put out by Dave Hunt that he often prayed to God to improve his self-esteem with the Lord **not** making him feel better! For a long time he wondered "Why -- why isn't God answering my prayer to make me feel I am **worth** something?!"

not Biblically done through telling one's self he is **valuable**, for all of us were born in **sin** and are **DEPRAVED!**

Well, when a Christian **feels bad about himself, or if other ABUSIVE people make him feel worthless, what is he supposed to DO about it? (a) Should he BELIEVE he is worthless and try to FUNCTION that way around abusive people or (b) copy the TV ad models and say, "I use shampoo because I'm WORTH it!?"**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . . )

**Need: "In the home or other environment, some with whom I relate along with myself see and TREAT ME as of little value! How am I to FUNCTION under these conditions?! Like a TV ad model, am I supposed to tell myself 'I'm WORTH it' or what, and WHY ?!"**

- I. **When God called Jeremiah to prophesy to Judah, the nation was in its twilight of spiritual apostasy and headed for judgment:**
  - A. Jeremiah began his ministry in king Josiah's days and continued through to Zedekiah's reign with the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah 1:1-3.
  - B. Thus, Jeremiah ministered to a very **difficult, rebellious** generation!
- II. **Within this apostate environment, Jeremiah and his countrymen both came to have a low appraisal of him as a PERSON:**
  - A. Jeremiah's origins left him to inherit little respect by his countrymen:
    1. Jeremiah came from the Levitical **priestly** line (Jer. 1:1). Since God's worship was at a low ebb, Jeremiah little respect!
    2. The tribe of Benjamin from which Jeremiah hailed had brutally abused a Levite's concubine out of contempt (Judges 19-21). A **priest** in *Benjamin* like **Jeremiah** would then tend to be **shy!**
  - B. Besides, Jeremiah viewed **himself** with **low esteem**, Jeremiah 1:6, 8a.
    1. When God called Jeremiah to prophesy, he complained he could not speak and viewed himself as inexperienced with others, Jer. 1:6.
    2. God's response in verse 8 shows Jeremiah feared people, making any public ministry a significant challenge for him, Jeremiah 1:8a.
- III. **To make Jeremiah effective, GOD had Jeremiah SHIFT from FOCUSING on His OWN WEAK HUMANITY to RELY on GOD and HIS great GIFTING and ASSIGNMENT FOR Jeremiah:**
  - A. **Opposite what many counselors often do, God did not counter Jeremiah's low self esteem by saying he was worth something, 7a.**
  - B. **Rather, God urged Jeremiah to focus on the greatness that God offered him in God's power and calling for Jeremiah, Jer. 1:7-8:**
    1. God informed Jeremiah He had chosen him to minister as a prophet before Jeremiah had been **formed** in the **womb**, Jeremiah 1:4-5.
    2. This news was **very encouraging** in light of Judah's recent **history**:
      - a. Jeremiah was called to serve in the 13th year of king **Josiah**, 1:2
      - b. **This** king was **significant** in view of a **300 YEAR** prediction of God's regarding **Josiah's coming** ministry in opposing idolatry: (a) When false worship first began in Israel, a prophet predicted a son of David,

"Josiah" would arise to ruin that worship's altar, 1 Kings 13:2. (b) With just **five** years to go of what had been a **295 year old wait** for **Josiah** to arrive and **fulfill** that prophecy (2 Kings 22:3a; 23:14-16), **Jeremiah** had come to **see** the rise of "**Josiah**" in anticipation of this prediction's fulfillment!

- c. Thus, for God **now** to tell **JEREMIAH** he was selected to minister before he was **formed** in the **womb** would have meant God was planning a ministry from long ago for him **just like** He had for **Josiah**! **Thus, God signaled Jeremiah had available a fruitful ministry regardless what anyone thought otherwise!**
- C. The **way** Jeremiah would minister **effectively** in spite of his disrespect from his countrymen and his own low self esteem was by his working in **God's** power to accomplish **God's** assignment, Jeremiah 1:6-19:
  1. Instead of ministry out of his lack of experience or low esteem, God told Jeremiah he would do and say **God's** will and words, Jer. 1:7.
  2. God then touched Jeremiah's mouth and gave him some "practice" seeing and interpreting a vision from God to give him confidence he could do and say **exactly** what **God** planned for him, Jer. 1:8-16.
  3. As Jeremiah's message was one of judgment to an **unreceptive** nation, **God** would make Jeremiah **uncommonly hard-headed** to their negative reactions, Jer. 1:8a, 17a, 18-19. **However, if Jeremiah failed to trust God's power and leading out to fear of his hearers, God would abandon him to great intimidation before such hearers in discipline of Jeremiah**, Jeremiah 1:17b!

**Application:** *To be effective in life in the face of low self esteem and/or crippling disrespect from abusive people with whom one relates, like Jeremiah, he must (1) come to know the Lord (by faith in Christ, John 3:16). (2) Then, like Jeremiah, he must DO and SAY ONLY what GOD **LEADS** him to do and say, and that in the spiritual gifting (cf. 1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Cor. 12:1-28) and power (2 Tim. 1:6-7) that GOD supplies. (3) GOD then GRACIOUSLY provides the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual strength needed to handle whatever one faces in life so that he can accomplish what GOD determined from eternity past for him to do, 2 Timothy 1:9. (4) Otherwise, if one of "low self esteem" who suffers abuse from others leans on himself or shies away in defensiveness without leaning on God, God lets him "dangle" in defeat, Jer. 1:17d!*

**Lesson:** *God does NOT want His people to handle "low self esteem" by ASSUMING they are HIGHLY esteemed after all, for **NO SINNER** can be innately valuable! Rather, we find in God His worth FOR us by grace!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )

Following last Sunday's Adult Sunday School Class, someone spoke to me about a witnessing venture he had the previous week.

This believer had wanted many times before to witness of the claims of Christ to the party involved, but had not known how to approach the subject because the unbelieving party was quite intelligent, articulate and committed to his own errant religious view! Witnessing to this party seemed a bit chancy!

Well, while operating in the Holy Spirit's power, this member of our class found himself almost by accident getting into a conversation with this party on spiritual things! At the time, he wondered, "What am I doing getting into such a conversation on this subject with **this** party of all people?!"

Nevertheless, he went along with the opportunity he found himself facing at the time and interacted as topic after topic arose!

Along the way, he said the **right** statements at just the **right** times! In fact, near the end of the conversation, he actually made a point that his "more articulate" listener with the errant view **could not answer**!

While relating to me of this incident, this believer said, "It had to have been the **Lord** that brought all of those facts to mind because I hadn't prepared what to say beforehand! I don't consider myself the 'sharpest knife in the drawer,' but in retrospect, I was **amazed** at what **I** had **even SAID**!"

**Handling "low self-esteem" is NOT Biblically achieved by our deceiving ourselves in telling ourselves we ARE worth something, for as depraved SINNERS, we have NO intrinsic worth! But when we -- like Jeremiah or like this believer -- face the world in the Lord's power, gifting and calling, and let the Lord create the opportunity to function well and then give us the bold resolve to function in the process, we, will accomplish anything God wants us to do! Then we will see VALUE in our EXISTENCE because of God's GRACE working THROUGH us!**