

Jeremiah 1

How often have you prayed 'Lord I can't do this' and how often by the grace of God have you been enabled to do it. For me that's many, many times. Every term, when I was training for ordination, we received a list of essay titles. Some to be 1000 words and some 3000 words. Now I was trained, as a mathematician, trained to be concise, so to me 3000 words was a book. Every time that list was given out, I cried out in my heart, 'Lord I can't do this' but by his grace I did. None of those essays received critical acclaim but they were good enough. One friend even cried out loud, 'Lord, are you sure you've got the right Dorothy Derrick.'

So I do sympathise with poor Jeremiah. From the moment I felt called by God to change my life completely, I felt inadequate. Why me? I had lots of excuses. But over the years I've learned to trust God, to trust that he will enable me, as long as I'm answering his call and not rushing off down my own path.

And just as we all have, Jeremiah had lots of excuses as to why he shouldn't respond to God's call. Ben Franklin once wrote, 'He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.' Now, there's a thought.

Jeremiah had every excuse ready, when God called him to be a prophet and his excuses, are often our excuses for not responding to God's call. But every time, Jeremiah was reassured by God's promise, that he would be with him every inch of the way.

Jeremiah was called to be a prophet to the nations, not a priest like his forbears, his father and his grandfather. A prophet was chosen to declare God's word to his people. Throughout the O.T. the prophets exposed the people's sins, calling them back to their Covenant responsibility before God.

Isaiah, who died seventy odd years before Jeremiah was born, delivered a message of hope, but the situation in Judah had become so much worse, that Jeremiah's message was one of Judgement. Sadly, his people just didn't want to know.

In this way, Jesus too was a prophet. He travelled from place to place, challenging people to change their ways and repent so that they would know God's forgiving love and his promise of eternal life. But many, like those in Jeremiah's time, chose to ignore him. And sadly, many today still choose to ignore God's call.