

[Day #28] Part 2: Watch Your Mouth! – Jeremiah & Jonah
Read: Psalm 94:11; 73:2, 15-17

Jeremiah has been called the Apostle Paul of the Old Testament because he, like Paul, was called from day one to suffer. Jeremiah can also be coupled with another prophet, the prophet Jonah. But in this case it is not due to the similarities but to the *dissimilarities*. As different as they both are, they each illustrate an important point about prayer in suffering.

Apart from the facts that Jeremiah and Jonah were both prophets and almost contemporaries (Jonah 100 years before Jeremiah), the dissimilarities begin:

- Jeremiah obeyed God's call from day one while Jonah fled God's call on day one.
- Jeremiah loved his people and pled with them to listen to God while Jonah hated the Ninevites and was angry when they listened to God.
- Jeremiah was persecuted and mocked by his people while Jonah was listened to and his message accepted by the Ninevites.

But these two very different prophets illustrate the same important truth about prayer in suffering: we can be forthright and honest with God.

Jeremiah accuses God, saying, "Ah, Sovereign LORD, how completely you have deceived this people and Jerusalem..." (Jer. 4:10) On another occasion He accuses God of deceiving and utterly overpowering him (Jer. 20:7)!

As for **Jonah**, his answer to God's call, though non-verbal, was abundantly clear: he just ran away! If his lack of a verbal response is an indication of Jonah's reticence to speak frankly with God, three days in the belly of the fish must have cured him, because his prayers in the last chapter of Jonah actually sound a bit mouthy (Jonah 4)!

Returning once again to the story of Job, one must wonder why God accepted Jeremiah's and Jonah's frank, even *mouthy* objections, while calling Job to task for his?

Perhaps the difference is the audience. Jeremiah and Jonah both spoke *to God* while Job's words were spoken in public, *to his comforters*. "Who is this that darkens my counsel," God asks Job, "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" (Job 38:2 & 40:8)

The issue is not that **God** cannot handle our "real" thoughts, it is more that other people *may not* be able to. The place to express questions, doubts, and accusations is before the One who already knows them, who already hears them in our consciousness. But double caution should be taken when expressing them to anyone else.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Jeremiah accused God to His face saying, “You tricked me!” and so did Jonah, who accused God of being wrong in forgiving the wicked Ninevites. Yet neither of them received the “dressing down” that God gave Job, who disparaged God in the eyes of others in order to justify himself.

How are these three cases different? Why did God call out Job while seemingly overlooking Jeremiah’s and Jonah’s accusations made to His face?

What lessons can be drawn from these examples of how we make our complaints about and before God?