Living Sermons

A MESSAGE BY PASTOR MARCOS ANDRÉS NEHODA

FAITHFUL TO HIS WORD

The Call of Jeremiah

JEREMIAH 1

"God measures success by faithfulness.
That is success: to be faithful to the Lord."

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Transcribed and Published by Livingsermons.com

Faithful to His Word: The Call of Jeremiah

Preacher: Pastor Marcos Andrés Nehoda

Publisher Livingsermons.com

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English edition, translated from the original Spanish

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Title: Faithful to His Word: The Call of Jeremiah
Preacher: Pastor Marcos Andrés Nehoda
Publisher: Livingsermons.com
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This English edition is a translation of the original Spanish message, *Fiel a su Palabra: El llamado de Jeremías*. The preacher read from the Spanish Reina-Valera 1960 Bible.

First Edition — 2026

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FOREWORD

How does God measure the success of one of His servants? That is the question running through this message, preached by Pastor Marcos Andrés Nehoda to his congregation in Sarandí, in the province of Buenos Aires, from the first chapter of the book of Jeremiah.

Verse by verse, the pastor walks through the call of the young prophet: a people who had drifted away, a hard message that had to be given in full, the fear of one who feels small, and God's promise: "I am with thee to deliver thee." With simple stories —the missionary among the Eskimos, the faithful doctor, the ambassador and the president—he shows that success, in God's eyes, is faithfulness.

The tone is that of a pastor who, after forty years with the same congregation, speaks frankly and with humor, and who does not water down the message. His closing appeal is as simple as it is demanding: read the Bible every day, alone with God, even though it is a battle.

This edition was prepared from the transcript of the live message and translated from the Spanish. The preacher's words, order and voice have been preserved; only time stamps, fillers and unnecessary repetitions have been removed, punctuation has been corrected, and chapters and subheadings have been added.

Read it slowly, with your Bible open. As he himself prays at the end: may it be the Word of God that fulfills its purpose in each heart.

Wisdom Epsi
- The Chief Editor, LivingSermons.com

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book is a faithful transcript of a live sermon delivered by the preacher under the inspiration and unction of the Holy Spirit. Every effort has been made to preserve the preacher's exact words, tone, flow, and spiritual authority, while carefully proofreading and formatting the message into a clear and readable ebook format.

The message you are about to read was originally ministered in a live congregational setting. As such, it carries the weight, urgency, and atmosphere of that sacred gathering. Minor grammatical and structural adjustments have been made solely to enhance readability, without altering the substance, intent, or power of the original delivery.

Watch the live sermons from which this message was transcribed on YouTube, **at *the Church's Official YouTube Channel***

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MAIN MESSAGE

Begins Here

CHAPTER ONE

A PEOPLE WHO DRIFTED AWAY

It fell to Jeremiah to prophesy in a very difficult time.

THREE SUNDAYS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

VERY WELL, SISTERS and brothers: in these three Sundays that remain to us—you know we have been in the New Testament for quite some time—we are going to go to the Old Testament, and we are going to look at the first chapter of three books; that is, today chapter 1 of Jeremiah, next Sunday chapter 1 of Isaiah, and on the last Sunday of the month, the first chapter of Joshua.

So I invite you to turn and find Jeremiah chapter 1. This is what the Word of God says:

> **JEREMIAH 1:1-19**
>
> *The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.*
>
> *Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified*

thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

FROM UNITY TO DIVISION

You know that God placed the twelve tribes in the promised land, and they were a precious unity, and they all agreed together to go to war. But sadly, afterward they began drifting away from the Lord.

It all began with the king. It is true that the first king was rejected by God, but after him came two very good kings; not perfect, but very good.

We have the hope that Solomon returned to the way of the Lord, because there was a time when he let himself be carried away by the things of this world. And some say that the book of Ecclesiastes is the book in which he acknowledges that all of this that belongs to the world is pure vanity, and that there is nothing better than to respect God, to fear God, for this is the whole of man.

But then came Rehoboam, and with Rehoboam the division of the kingdom took place. Barely two tribes remained with Rehoboam, in what came to be the southern kingdom. And the rest of the tribes, the remaining ten, were in the north, and they divided; they separated from those of the south. So two kingdoms remained.

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM CARRIED CAPTIVE

The northern kingdom drifted away very soon, and far, far more than this king Rehoboam had. King Jeroboam, who was there, even made his own place of worship so that the devout believers of the north would not go to the south, where the temple was, to worship. For then, little by little, the south would have gone on absorbing those of the north. So he said, “No, we are going to have our own worship”; but a worship not of God, rather a total idolatry.

And what happened was a terrible thing, because the ten tribes were carried away captive to Assyria, and from there it is as though they never came back, although some few did return. What happened was a total disaster.

THE SOUTH ALSO TURNED AWAY

But the southern kingdom, Judah and Benjamin, still belonged to the kingdom of God, being faithful. Yet the years went by and they too began drifting away from God. And this is a terrible thing.

And it fell to Jeremiah to prophesy in that age, in that time; a very difficult time they were living in, although one part of his life—we will see it now—went fairly well, because there was a good king who was faithful to God.

CHAPTER TWO

GOD'S WORD ON HUMAN LIPS

It is His Word, not our arguments, that will remain.

THE WORDS OF JEREMIAH

AND HERE IT says: "The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah." I do not know whether you noticed something strange there, because it always says "the word of the LORD" that God gave to Jeremiah, or to Isaiah, or to another. Does that not catch your attention?

Well, we know that it is the inspired Word of God, because in other parts of Jeremiah it says, "Thus saith the Lord God." There is something we have to keep in mind, and it is that God uses men, and women, to carry His holy Word. And so, while it is the Word of God, it is also the words that a man or a woman is giving, with all their defects; but God is using that person.

DISCERNING WHAT GOD MEANT TO SAY

Beyond the failings and defects that the one who gives the Word may have, we have to discern what the Word of God is. It may be a brother who got a text reference wrong, or who confused one word with another. But what did God want to say to me through this weak instrument?

I remember Pastor Juan Carlos Ortiz, who used to say in his prayer: "Lord, perhaps not everything I said was right. In some things I was mistaken. Well, if it was too

strong, lighten it, Lord, in their hearts. Or perhaps, Lord, I said it too softly: set it more strongly in their hearts." Because God says, "My word shall not return unto me void."

So, although we are human and we are sinners, if God has called us to a service such as giving the Word, we have to stand on the Word of God, because it is His Word, not our arguments, that will remain. "My word shall not return unto me void." That is why it is so important to stand on the Word of God.

ANATHOTH, WITHIN SIGHT OF JERUSALEM

It says: "The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin." Nearby, a few kilometers from Jerusalem, was the town of Anathoth, which still exists under a similar name. And Jeremiah, from the town of Anathoth, could make out the walls of the city of Jerusalem, and he knew that the temple was there.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROPHET WHO HAD TO SAY IT ALL

I must not hold back any part of the Word of God.

IN THE DAYS OF JOSIAH

AND NOW VERSE 2 says: "To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month."

It says that this word continued until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. Although—we will see it in a little while—after that captivity God gave him something like an epilogue, something apart, to speak to people after that captivity.

But it says, first of all, that it came to him in the days of Josiah. This was a king faithful to God, and one who enjoyed a certain peace, because the enemies were in turmoil, fighting among themselves. So in the meantime they left the southern kingdom alone. They had already carried the northerners away captive, but those of the south had that time of peace.

So Jeremiah, together with Josiah, made the most of it. Josiah used the time to restore the worship of God, to correct the things that were wrong in the country, as king. And Jeremiah, as prophet, had to speak to the people on God's behalf.

THE PRIEST AND THE PROPHET

You know the difference between a prophet and a priest, don't you? The priest intercedes for the people. The priest speaks to God in the place of the people, or in favor of the people. Whereas the prophet speaks to the people on behalf of God.

Let us repeat it. The priest speaks to God on behalf of the people: "Lord, have mercy on the people." But the prophet speaks to the people on behalf of God: "Thus says God."

THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES PROPHETS TODAY

I do not know whether you have noticed it. There are some who claim to be prophets nowadays, but the Word of God, the canon, is closed: from Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, to Revelation 22, verse 21. We can no longer add anything more.

But when these would-be prophets speak personally, you will notice that they say everything nice to the person. "The Lord says, Sister Estela, that you are a good woman and God is going to bring you out of that sadness." Who does not have some sadness? Of course. And Sister Estela starts to cry: "Yes, of course I have some sadness!" "But God is going to bless you, He is going to lift you up." Ah, all lovely things.

There are prophets who do speak like that to the nations; they say, "This is going to happen, that is going to happen." Every time they say this will happen, that will happen, never once have I received it before it happened. Always after it happened: "Ah, there was a prophet who had prophesied that this was going to happen." And why did you not tell me at least fifteen days before? He said nothing. That way it is easy.

THE WHOLE MESSAGE

Well, but generally the prophets who speak personally speak exhorting people. But why is it generally so? Well… because the human being is a sinner; because for the

unconverted, the ungodly, there is only judgment. And when the believer turns away from the Lord, which sadly happens very, very often, the prophet has to be faithful to the message of the Word of God and has to say what God says.

Because if we do not say it… I had it written down here—I do not know whether I will find it—; it says this: "If I want to be a messenger of God, I must communicate the whole message. I must not hold back any part of the Word of God." See what a responsibility.

HUMANLY SPEAKING, VERY LITTLE SUCCESS

Now, in those twenty-three years—because Jeremiah was preaching, being God's prophet, for forty years; but twenty-three years he was there with Josiah—he set about exhorting the people, because he saw that they had turned away from God and that they were becoming very much like those of the north, who had to be carried away captive. And he spoke to them, and spoke to them, and spoke to them. They paid him no heed.

A prophet who had, humanly speaking, very little success. How they resented Jeremiah! The things they did to Jeremiah! They threatened him with death. They put him in a cistern, in a pit with mud. Look at the things they did to him. And he had little success, because he did not manage to curb the carnality or the sin of the people.

And finally, with the other kings that are mentioned—because it says that the word of God also came to him "in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month"—it was a failure, humanly speaking, because he did not manage to keep the people of the south from being carried away captive as well.

And he had to deliver a hard message. He would say to them—he seemed not to be a nationalist, not to be a patriot—he would say to them: "Surrender to Babylon, and it

will be the best thing you can do. Surrender to him, do not resist him, because a great many are going to be killed."

Imagine it: do you not understand how much they resented him? Because they said, "What? You have to defend our country!" No, but he was there to defend the message that God had given him, and he had to be faithful to that message.

But do you know something? We measure success in that way. "See? This Jeremiah did not have much success; practically none, because he preached forty years and look what happened: the people were carried away captive anyway. What for?" Forty years suffering so many things as he suffered at the hands of the people who had turned away from God. The people of God had turned away from God: see what a contradiction. What for?

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD MEASURES SUCCESS BY FAITHFULNESS

That is success: to be faithful to the Lord.

ANOTHER WAY OF MEASURING

BUT THE THING is that God measures success in another way. How does He measure it? God measures success by faithfulness. “You were faithful to Me.” That is success: to be faithful to the Lord.

THE MISSIONARY AMONG THE ESKIMOS

There was a missionary who went to preach among the Eskimos. Do you know who the Eskimos are? Those people who live up there in the northern region, in Greenland, who wear very thick furs, who have customs very different from ours, who often live very poorly.

Once a journalist from the newspaper Clarín went to see them; he lived with them for a little while. And when the lady of the igloo where he was staying gave birth, the grandmother already knew her fate. This grandmother went out at night, very happy about the baby that had been born; a little old grandmother who already wore glasses. She went out of the igloo in the night. And do you know why? Because they cannot support so many people: if one is born, another has to die. And the grandmother was eaten by a polar bear. She knew what was going to happen to her.

He says that in the morning they found the pair of glasses, what was left. How terrible, isn't it?

Well, this missionary went to preach to the Eskimos. It is so cold, brethren… Sometimes it is seventy degrees below zero. He preached to them with all faithfulness.

I had the privilege of holding in my hands the Bible that he translated. Curiously, the name of the language seems to speak of faith: it is the Bible in the "Cree" language [in Spanish, *cree* means "he believes"], but with a k, k as in kilo. I saw it in a museum, in the house that belonged to Bartolomé Mitre.

And he preached with all faithfulness. You know, of course, that he had to learn the language. Do you know? He preached a whole year, and not a single one was converted. What is he going to do? "Well, I had no success; I am going back home." No, no, no. He went on preaching the second year. He preached the second year, and not one was converted.

THEY WILL ALWAYS CRITICIZE YOU

What would the brethren in the faith say? "God did not call him to that service. See? He wanted to play the brave one, that he can go all the way up there, to the Eskimos, to make himself famous, that a missionary…" No, he was not doing it for that. But people, you know how they talk: they will always criticize you.

There was a man who had a little cart in which he carried the things he sold, or bought, or found in the street; I do not know exactly. A cart that was all falling apart, but on the back it had a little sign that said: "They would have criticized me just the same if I had had a nice car." Because when you see that someone has a nice car, what do you say? "And this one, who knows what he has had his hand in to be able to get such a fine car?" Always, always they will criticize you. So you have to be used to that.

FOR THAT ONE

He had no success, but he stayed on there, and went on preaching the third year. Nothing happened. Four years: nothing happened. Five years: nothing either. I would have been freezing there already. Six years, seven years, eight years, nine years, ten years he preached, and nothing happened. But at the end of those ten years, one was converted to Christ. Glory to God!

"For that one?" they will say. For that one. Billy Graham used to say, "Even if only one were converted when I come to preach here in Argentina, it was worth it." Because, in time, I was one of the organizers of those Billy Graham campaigns, the last time he came. And I could see that the immense majority of those who were in the River Plate stadium—there were about 92,000 of us—were all believers. So much expense! And afterward, the 500,000 dollars that remained to be paid had to be paid by Billy Graham's organization, because they took up the offering, but each one gave just a little. And well, but Billy Graham said, "It was worth it."

Well, because of that one Eskimo who was converted to Christ, others began to be converted. A hundred Eskimos were converted to the Lord after ten years. Up there the Eskimos are not millions of people; they are few. So for a hundred to be converted is a very high percentage. Was it worth it? Yes, it was worth it.

But what was the success? The faithfulness of that missionary, who was sure that God had called him, even though he was aware of his defects, of his weaknesses, that perhaps he was not even worthy to go and fulfill so important a mission. Well, that is how it was with Jeremiah.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEFORE I FORMED THEE

God has a plan for you. Before we were born, God already knew.

CALLED FROM THE WOMB

"THEN THE WORD of the LORD came unto me, saying"—verse 4—"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

Do you remember someone to whom God said something similar, or who said that God had called him in that way? Whom do you remember? The apostle Paul says in Galatians: God, "who called me from my mother's womb." There are several people in the Bible whom God, from their mother's womb, already set apart for the service of the Lord.

"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." We always say: God has a plan for you. Before we were born, God already knew. The important thing is to know what God called us to. What did God call me for?

CALLED, FIRST OF ALL, TO BE SAVED

Well, one of the things God called you for is that you should be saved, that you should know Him. And if there should be anyone here who has not yet given himself to Jesus Christ, who has not surrendered before Jesus Christ, who has not

received Him in his heart, today is the opportunity to come to Christ, and repent, and be truly converted to Jesus Christ.

How many people we have seen who seem to be believers, but are not believers! They have not truly been converted to the Lord.

WHEN NUMBERS ARE THE GOAL

And today, well, you know that in the churches—in many churches, I do not say in all—the aim is to have a great number of people. And of course, people are interested in entertainment, in what is interesting, in what is attractive; but if you preach the Word of God to them, many do not like it.

So then, of course, the message of the Word has to be watered down, the volume has to be turned down, people have to be brought comfort, they have to be told: "Well, nobody is perfect, we all have our faults, but God is going to help you; you are going to be healed, you are going to find work, you are going to prosper." Things that are not false either, because very, very often many Christians have been healed. But telling people that they are sinners and that they have to repent of their sins is very seldom heard in today's pulpits; very seldom. And even less do you hear about hell, about eternal condemnation, because that does not draw numbers.

But if I set myself up as a prophet and prophesy nice things to each one, people will keep coming, because they want to keep hearing more of that; and there will be more people, and more people, and we turn the church into something that does not look like a church, but that draws a lot of people.

But how many of those people are really converted to the Lord Jesus? I am not saying that because a congregation is large it should be criticized and all of them called unconverted. No, no, no. A congregation can be large and all of them be converted to Christ. But I am speaking in the practical sense: very often that is what happens. Many people; but how many are really converted?

Someone says, “How lovely, what a lovely opportunity, then, if they are unconverted, to preach the gospel to them!” Of course, that is what we would wish to do.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MESSAGE THAT IS NOT WATERED DOWN

However much I water down the message and many people come, the people will not be saved.

JESUS PREACHED VERY STRONGLY

BUT THE LORD Jesus preached very strongly; He preached so strongly that it even seemed He was discouraging people from following Him. Once He even said to them, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "No man can serve two masters," for he will neglect the one and attend to the other. "You cannot serve God and riches," He said at that moment. Today we could also say: you cannot serve God and also…, isn't that so?

It says that from that moment all those who were there, one by one, went away. So much so that, of all that multitude that had been there, only twelve people remained, who were the twelve disciples.

"DO YOU ALSO WANT TO GO AWAY?"

And when the Lord saw that He had twelve disciples left, did He say, "Oh, what a blunder, what a mistake I have made"?

Like now, when there is a new film about Jesus, and it is very attractive and very catchy, because you want to watch all the episodes. And Matthew appears in it, taking notes—because he took notes like a stenographer—of what Jesus was saying,

and he would say to Him: "Look, Jesus, this thing here that You said in the Sermon on the Mount was not very good, it was not very prudent. Let us put it this way, that You said it like this." Well, Jesus accepted the little lie; after all... Because the other one was correcting Him. And another would come and say to Him: "Look, Jesus, You must not preach like that; You have to say it like this, like this." See it for yourselves in the film. I saw those parts.

But Jesus knew what His Father had called Him for. And when He saw the twelve, He did not do as I just said, clutching His head and saying, "Oh, how imprudent I was. Look, I drove people away instead of drawing people." He said to the twelve disciples, "Do you also want to go away?"

That is courage. That is being a person faithful to the Lord. I am not going to lower the message of the gospel, nor the demands of the gospel, out of a wish to protect the number of people. One has to be faithful to the Lord. Because, do you know something? However much I water down the message and many people come, the people will not be saved. They can only be saved when the message is faithful, when it speaks and tells you the truth.

THE FAITHFUL DOCTOR

For example: a person goes to the doctor because he feels a pain in his stomach, or whatever, and the doctor examines him and realizes that this man has a cancerous tumor in his stomach. "I cannot leave the patient sad; and I want him to keep coming, and that way I collect a fee every time." And so he tells him, "Ah, it is more or less fine. Take this aspirin." He prescribes him some aspirin.

But if he is a faithful doctor, who keeps the Hippocratic oath he took when he graduated as a doctor, he is going to say to him: "Look, sir, you have a cancerous tumor. You have to be treated immediately. Perhaps you can be operated on, because if there is no metastasis you can be operated on. And you have to take this seriously, because otherwise you are going to die."

What do you think? Which one is more faithful? The doctor who gives him the aspirin, or the doctor who tells him he has cancer? But it is not popular to say that; it is not popular. Yet that is the doctor's mission: to tell him the truth.

THE NICE THINGS THAT DO NOT SAVE

Because, however good a doctor he may be, saying all nice, beautiful things so that people go home from the service happy: "How nicely the preacher preached! What lovely things he told us! That we are very special, that we are the crown of creation, that we are good people, but that it is sometimes society that makes people bad. And what do we do? Come to the services, and well, let us do good: when a person, a beggar, comes by the house, let us give him a piece of bread, and the Lord knows. The Lord knows. Why, look, even if you are a Muslim, or a Buddhist, or a Hindu, if you were sincere in your faith, in your religion, God is going to save you just the same."

A preacher used to say, "Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary for all humanity, so all humanity is already saved." I came to correspond with him and came to argue with him. "The only thing is, the poor souls do not know that they are saved; that is why they live as they live."

So then, one would have to go as a missionary to tell them that they are saved. Look: what missionary would have put his head in danger—of having his head cut off, or of being cooked in a pot and eaten by cannibals—only to go and tell people that they are saved? Better that they stay where they are, they with their ignorance; after all, I am going to see them in heaven.

WITHOUT JESUS, PEOPLE ARE LOST

No. The missionaries went to preach the Word of God because they were convinced that people without Jesus are lost. John 3:16 says so: "For God so loved the world,

that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." That is, humanity is lost and needs Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

Ah, but these are not popular messages; they are very hard messages. "I am going to go to another church, where they talk to you all sweet and cuddly, all nice. Now that one, what a pastor he is!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

SAY NOT, "I AM A CHILD"

The difference is that I am going to go with you.

THE EXCUSES

AH, WELL. BUT: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee—I set you apart, I reserved you—and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak—I cannot speak before the public—for I am a child."

Well, we do not know how old he was. Maybe he was between seventeen and twenty years old. "But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child." Do not put that forward as an excuse.

Do you remember someone else who also made excuses? Moses. Of course, Moses made excuses. His excuses were perhaps not as valid as Jeremiah's, because Moses was a grown man, he had experience in life; but this one was a very young man, and it was natural that he should feel weak before such a mission as God was giving him.

"Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."

TWO REASONS TO BE AFRAID

Then He says to him, "Be not afraid." Do not be afraid, eh? He says to him, "Be not afraid of their faces." And poor Jeremiah was afraid for two reasons.

One, because he felt very young, weak, incapable of fulfilling such a task; he felt small. And well, I believe that is one of the conditions for the Lord to use us. Because when we think that we are something, God cannot use us. We have to feel that we are nothing before the presence of the Lord, and we place ourselves in His hands to hear His command.

But the other reason why Jeremiah was afraid was that he knew the message he had to give was hard, was terrible; and he knew the state of God's people: turned away, far from God.

Do you know? One of the things that has always caught my attention was that the people of God, in the high places, offered sacrifices, committed immoral acts, had their idols; but they said that they were doing it for Jehovah. See what a thing. If you looked at them, they were all Jehovists, all believers in Jehovah God. But the life that lay behind all that, that was the terrible thing. That is why he was aware and was afraid.

THE AMBASSADOR AND THE PRESIDENT

But God says to him: "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD."

I had a friend—you knew him—Dr. Alberto Bonfante, who lived to the age of 101, and he was an ambassador; I believe he was ambassador to Italy. Well, when the president appointed him ambassador, he went with his whole family, but the president did not go with him.

But here God says to him: "I am sending you, just as the president or the king sends his ambassador. The difference is that I am going to go with you. I am going to be

with you. I will be with thee to deliver thee." How lovely! The ambassador with the president. How wonderful! How extraordinary!

CHAPTER EIGHT

MY WORDS IN THY MOUTH

Every day we need to receive God's instructions.

LIPS THAT GOD HAS TO TOUCH

AND DO YOU know something? Verse 9 says: "Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth."

Do you remember someone else who also...? Isaiah. An angel went to the altar where all the burning coals were, took a coal with tongs, and applied the burning coal to his lips; because Isaiah realized how unclean he was, or felt, before the presence of God, being a man of unclean lips.

Brothers and sisters, could it be that God has to apply that burning coal to our lips as well? Because when we get angry, how do we act? Do you utter bad words? Do you utter curses? How is God going to use you with those dirty lips?

Or perhaps you do not say bad words, but you speak ill of people, of your brethren, in your conversations. Sometimes one may point out something negative, but with prudence, with respect; not in a haughty, insolent way.

THE SECRET: READ THE BIBLE

And it says: "The LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth." In this case it is to give him the message. "And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."

Do you want, brethren, God to put His word in your mouth? Would you like what comes out of your mouth to be the Word of God? I am going to tell you. I am going to tell you the secret, just between us. I am not going to charge you anything; this secret is free: read the Bible.

No, no; not the kind where one can even get together with the family, or with one's workmates, or classmates at school; but that reading which is between God and you, that reading in which God speaks to you. A message that God is not going to share when there are other people in front of you: He is going to say it to you. And that is important.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR EACH DAY

You know that every day we need to receive God's instructions. Every day. Every day we read, we listen to the news, we look at our phones, we find out what happened. Today a sister came and said to me, "Did you see what happened in Panama? The earthquake, 7.6." How does she know? Because she saw the news. And every day we see the news in one way or another, whether on television or on our phones. And sometimes even when one goes shopping, a customer says: "Did you see what happened? What a thing! Did you see the home-invasion robbery over there in Berazategui? What a break-in!" And it happened like this and like that; you find out even through the neighbors.

We need, brethren, to receive God's instructions every day.

THREE OUT OF EVERY TEN

And on Friday we were talking about the fact that the church, the believers, do not read the Bible. Of course, I am speaking with mature people. When I say that Christians do not read the Bible, I do not mean that none do; it is understood that we are speaking in general. And look, let me see if I can find it.

I looked up on the internet what percentage of Christians really read the Bible every day, that is, daily. This is what the answer says: "Various surveys and sociological studies on religious habits, such as those carried out by Lifeway and other agencies specializing in religious demographics, consistently indicate that only between 30 and 32% of Christians, especially Protestant churchgoers or regular church attenders"—like you here—only they read the Bible every day.

The daily percentage: "Around three out of every ten Christians say they open and read the Scriptures daily." Out of every ten Christians, there are seven who do not read the Bible every day. And we are saying that we have to receive instructions every day. Because maybe you go to the bank, because you did not read the news, and it is closed. "Eh? Why is it closed?" "But, madam, sir, do you not know that today is a bank holiday?" Ah, read the news, madam, sir. Only three out of every ten.

Regular but not daily frequency: that is, people who read the Bible once a week or twice a week, that is a quarter; 25% do that. And there is another 25% who confess that their reading of the Bible is occasional or nil, nothing at all; maybe once every six months. That is also 25%.

But it says that the habit of daily reading increases slightly among those who take a very active part in their church communities, attending church weekly. Although even in that select group, the majority do not keep a daily discipline.

I do not need to be a sorcerer, a magician, a mentalist, a fortune-teller, to realize that this is the reality. The believers themselves tell me, "No, I do not read the Bible." They have confessed it. I did not condemn them, but I counseled them.

And it shows. The brethren who read the Bible come and ask me, "Oh, Marcos, such and such a thing that I read, can you explain it to me?" Even brethren from other congregations ask me questions, and even pastors consult me, and I answer them over the internet.

THE BOOKS GOD DID NOT INSPIRE

A little while ago a brother sent me one: "Please, can you give me your opinion on this?" Do you know what came to me, brethren? A Bible that is called... the title does not say "The Holy Bible"; it says "The Hidden Bible." I hope you are not selling it, eh? Ah, no, no. Because instead of having a few apocryphal books, as the Catholic Church has in its Bibles, they have, in total, instead of 66 books, 80 books. So it is as though they say: "We have the complete Bible. We really do have it; because you Christians have not been shown all the books, because it does not suit them, because it is a lot of work to print, the Bibles would come out more expensive." Those are the arguments they give.

Well, so I answered this brother. I told him that in reality there are a great many books, many, many more, not only in the Old but in the New Testament, that we do not have because God has ordained that we should not have them, and because they are not inspired by God. I have examined some of them, and they are terrible.

There is one of the books, Second Maccabees—one of those apocryphal books of the Old Testament—which, when it ends, says: "I have tried to write in the best way, but if I was mistaken in anything, forgive me, please excuse it, because we all have failings." That is not a writing inspired by God, where the prophet says, "Thus says God: this is so," with that certainty, with that firmness.

A CONSTANT CHALLENGE

So, brethren, it says here, in summary—look at this, just what we were talking about before—: "Although the possession of physical or digital copies of the Bible is extremely high in Christian homes, the practice of reading it continually and daily remains a constant challenge within communities of faith."

Do you see, brother, sister? That is why, as a pastor, when I tell you something, I am sure of what I am saying. I am a person who likes to investigate, to talk, to find out, to consult.

CHAPTER NINE

TEARING DOWN IN ORDER TO BUILD

God wants to build a holy building, and God wants to plant.

FOUR AND TWO

"THEN THE LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."

Look at the mission He gave him. Look: to root out, to pull down, to destroy, to throw down; and to build and to plant. How many negative things does God entrust to him, and how many positive things? Negative: one, two, three, four. And positive, only two. That is: to throw down and to destroy, in order then to build; to root out and to pull down, in order then to plant.

STRONGHOLDS IN THE HEART

Because, brethren, within people's hearts there are walls, strongholds. There are strongholds that are very hard to break. And those strongholds that come from the life of sin, that come from the former life, that are sins accepted and taken as something natural and normal in life, all of that has to be thrown down.

There is a resistance among God's people to receiving the sound and upright Word of God; a resistance. And it is going to be harder and harder, brothers and sisters, to

preach the faithful Word of the Lord.

Sometimes, when I see certain faces while I am preaching—I am not talking about today, eh? but it has happened to me—I say, "At any moment they are going to come and attack me with a knife and stab me with it." And Jeremiah was put in prison for preaching the Word of God; but not by the unconverted, the communists, the Muslims, no: by the people of God's own nation.

And those strongholds have to be thrown down so that God can build something good; as the Word of God says, that we are being built up as a church, as a holy temple for the Lord. Because all those bricks will not do: they are full of sin. God wants to build a holy building, and God wants to plant. He does not want the church to be a patch of weeds, no; He wants them to be good plants.

THE ROD OF AN ALMOND TREE

"Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me"—verse 11—"saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree." That is the good thing: God tests his vision. What spiritual vision does he have? What do you see? Or do you see nothing? God calls us to have a vision, but as He sees it, from the heights.

And he said, "I see a rod of an almond tree," which in Hebrew is *shaqed*. "Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it." Where it says "I will hasten," it says *shoqed*. He says, "What do you see?" And Jeremiah says, "I see a *shaqed*." "Ah, thou hast well seen, for I *shoqed* my word to perform it." I hasten.

And why did He connect the hastening with the almond tree? Because of the almond tree; to this day, when tourists go to this town where Jeremiah lived, they are offered almonds, because the almond tree is the first thing that ripens there, in that area. That is, God hastens His word to perform it.

THE SEETHING POT

"And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north—of course, Babylon—an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands."

THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

"Thou therefore gird up thy loins—tighten your belt—and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them."

Have I been faithful to His Word? At the judgment seat of Christ I will have to give account. Have I been faithful, or out of fear of the public have I refused to give the whole counsel of God? No. I never want to refuse to give the whole counsel of God.

We were remarking with a pastor that not a few pastors, even well-known ones—I am not going to give their names—when they get old they soften, and the things they used to preach were wrong, now they say, "Well, we let it pass." What a thing, eh? What a thing! It ought not to be so.

"Speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them." The apostle Paul said: "I do not want to be eliminated, I do not want to be disapproved myself. I want to be faithful to the Lord so as to receive the crown which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

AN IRON PILLAR, WALLS OF BRASS

"For, behold, I have made thee this day"—He says that to the weak one, to Jeremiah, that young lad of seventeen or twenty—"for, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee."

CHAPTER TEN

AN EVERYDAY BATTLE

We need to hear the voice of God.

SO THAT GOD MAY SPEAK TO YOU

BRETHREN, IT IS a spiritual battle. If we want to be faithful to the Lord, it is a spiritual battle. And you are going to have to get up earlier so that God may speak to you. Or you are going to have to stay up later at night so that God may speak to you. Or you are going to have to give up your lunch at the office so that God may speak to you there, sitting in the square, I do not know. We need to hear the voice of God.

A young man said to a pastor, "Pastor, I want God to speak to me." "Ah, well: take the Bible, read it." "No, no, but I want God to speak to me like this, audibly." "Well, read it out loud." Because this is the Word of God, and that is what we are doing here.

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

Brothers, sisters: I have failed as a pastor in getting the brethren to read the Word of God. Well, on the one hand, the churches that listen to me over the internet may say that perhaps I have failed; because I would like all of us to read the Bible, and every day.

There are Christians, and they are present here, who have never read the whole Bible, like that, in order, from Genesis to Revelation. They have never yet read it. Perhaps they skipped the lists of names in First Chronicles, you see? Or when God

was saying, “Make the tabernacle like this, put the little pole here, put the cloth on top, put this, that.” “Eh, no, that is very boring.”

And I could also ask you whether from last Sunday until this Sunday, every day, you have read the Bible. Mind you: personally. But each one can answer that for himself, is that not so?

THE BATTLE OF EVERY MORNING

It is a spiritual battle, brethren, that we have to fight every day. I told the brethren on Friday that for me every day it is a spiritual battle to read the Bible, because ten thousand things turn up for me to do when I get up. “Oh, the windows have to be opened, because everything is dark. How could I not open the window?” “Oh, but I have to go to the bathroom.” “Oh, I have to take such-and-such a medicine; yes, yes, because otherwise the time goes by.” Ten thousand things, all so that I cannot have that special time with God.

The same thing happens to Susi as to me. In the morning we do not want to talk to each other, because we want the first one to speak to us to be the Lord. Because maybe I make a comment, and maybe a rather negative one—“Did you see what happened yesterday?”—and I ruin for her all that precious time she needs to have with the Lord.

And the few times we argue it is over that: because I speak to her, and she is already reading the Word of God. But the same thing happens to me. “Enough, enough,” I say, “do not tell me; all right, I am reading the Word of God.” Or I say to her, “I am about to read the Bible. Wait, wait, wait.” “But can you not see that I was praying?” Because before reading the Bible one has to pray. Well, glory to God that those are our arguments, isn’t it?

THEY SHALL FIGHT AGAINST THEE, BUT THEY SHALL NOT PREVAIL

Well, brethren, it is a fight. "And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee"—of course, you have to do your part—"for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee."

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Thank You, Lord. Thank You for Your Word in Jeremiah chapter 1. Thank You because You gave me the courage and the firmness to say these things, Lord. May it be Your Word that fulfills Your purpose in each heart.

And, Lord, if I said anything too strong, lighten it in their hearts. And if I still said anything rather light, make it firm, make it deeper, deepened by the revelation of Your Holy Spirit.

Thank You, Lord. Thank You very much. In the precious name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

God bless you.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

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2 Kings 17:6* — The ten tribes carried away captive to Assyria (Chapter 1)

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Genesis 1:1 – Revelation 22:21 — The canon of Scripture is closed (Chapter 3)

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Galatians 1:15* — God, who called me "from my mother's womb" (Chapter 5)

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John 3:16 — "For God so loved the world" (Chapter 6)

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2 Maccabees 15:38–39* — An apocryphal book, cited by the preacher as an example of a writing that is not inspired (Chapter 8)

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Jeremiah 37:15* — Jeremiah put in prison (Chapter 9)

Ephesians 2:21* — Built up as a holy temple in the Lord (Chapter 9)

2 Corinthians 5:10* — The judgment seat of Christ (Chapter 9)

Acts 20:27* — Declaring all the counsel of God (Chapter 9)

1 Corinthians 9:27* — "Lest… I myself should be a castaway" (Chapter 9)

2 Timothy 4:8* — The crown which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give (Chapter 9)

** The preacher did not cite chapter and verse; the reference was identified by the editors.*

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Marcos Andrés Nehoda is the pastor of the Evangelical Christian Church—whose motto is "God First" (*Dios Primero*)—located at 346 Suipacha Street, Sarandí, Province of Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area, AMBA), Argentine Republic. He began pastoring at the age of 30 and is now 70; that is to say, he has been pastoring the same congregation for 40 years.

By the grace and mercy of the Lord, the church has sent two missionaries to preach and evangelize in Islamic countries, and has helped to start new works and testimonies, both in the district of Avellaneda (helping a Pentecostal church) and in the city of La Plata (helping a Baptist church). For many years it has at the same time known joyful seasons in impoverished neighborhoods in several localities, where some children have grown up, been baptized in their youth, and even entered into marriage in the Lord.

The church gathers children on Saturdays—the children of congregation members and of neighbors from the surrounding area—nurturing their lives; teenagers and young adults are cared for by responsible individuals. There are meetings for women, for men, for teenagers and young adults, and for children. On Sunday mornings the congregation gathers to worship and praise the Lord, to listen to the exposition of His Holy Word, and, for those who have already been baptized, to take part in the Lord's Supper.

The church has provided clothing and shoes to charities in remote areas such as the provinces of Chaco and Entre Ríos; it recognizes need and helps regardless of denomination, provided sound biblical doctrine is taught. It has distributed pamphlets of God's Word door to door on several occasions; its meeting place served as the operations center for L.A.P.E.N. (Argentine League for the Evangelization of Children), and it has conducted children's courses with materials provided by brethren residing in the United States, including full-color New Testaments adapted for children.

For years he took the opportunity to broadcast radio programs on FM, and he currently uses social media to spread the Word of God.

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