

Jeremiah 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

God returns to addressing Jeremiah personally, providing encouragement before opposition: 'Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee.' The command 'gird up thy loins' (ata motnekha, אַתָּה מוֹתְנֶכְחָ) is a Hebrew idiom meaning to tuck long robes into a belt for action—preparing for activity, battle, or journey. It signifies readiness, determination, and resolve. The sequence 'arise, and speak' connects action (standing up to address) with proclamation—public prophetic declaration. The content must be 'all that I command thee' (et kol-asher anokhi atsavvekha, וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי אֶצְוֶךָ)—complete obedience without selective editing. Then comes a stern warning: 'be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.' The verb 'be not dismayed' (al-techat, אַל-תַּחַת, from chatat, חָטָא) means don't be shattered, terrified, or broken down. 'At their faces' repeats the earlier concern (verse 8)—human intimidation and opposition. The consequence is sobering: 'lest I confound thee before them'—if Jeremiah lets fear silence him, God Himself will cause his humiliation. This reveals that greater danger comes from disobedience to God than opposition from men.

Historical Context

This warning proved necessary throughout Jeremiah's ministry. He faced continuous pressure to soften or silence his message: family threats (Jeremiah 12:6), priests' beating and imprisonment (Jeremiah 20:1-2), false prophets' public contradiction (Jeremiah 28), mob violence (Jeremiah 26:8-9), royal contempt

(Jehoiakim burning his scroll, Jeremiah 36), and officials' attempt to kill him (cistern imprisonment, Jeremiah 38:6). At times Jeremiah wavered, expressing desire to quit (Jeremiah 20:9), yet God's word burned within him irrepressibly. The warning 'lest I confound thee before them' meant that human-pleasing compromise would result in greater shame than faithful proclamation. This principle applies to all Christian witness: we must fear God more than man (Matthew 10:28), and faithfulness to truth matters more than audience approval (Galatians 1:10). Those who soften God's message to avoid offense ultimately experience greater loss than those who boldly proclaim it.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does the command to 'gird up thy loins' suggest about the spiritual preparation and resolved determination required for faithful witness?
2. How does recognizing that compromise brings divine 'confounding' help prioritize fearing God over fearing human opposition?

Interlinear Text

וְאַתָּה	תִּגְדָּל ר	מִתְנֵ יָךְ	וְקָמָה	וְדַבַּרְתָּ	אֵלַיָּהּ ׀	
H859	Thou therefore gird up	thy loins	and arise	and speak	H413	
	H247	H4975	H6965	H1696		
ת	כָּל	אִשְׁ ר	אֲנִי י	אֲצַוָּךְ	אֲל	אֲחַתְּךָ
H853	H3605	H834	H595	unto them all that I command	H408	lest I confound
				H6680		H2865
לְפָנֵיהֶם:	פָּן	אֲחַתְּךָ	לְפָנֵיהֶם:			
at their faces	H6435	lest I confound	at their faces			
H6440		H2865	H6440			

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 18:46 (Parallel theme): And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

1 Peter 1:13 (Parallel theme): Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Jeremiah 23:28 (Parallel theme): The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.

Exodus 7:2 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

Luke 12:35 (Parallel theme): Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

Job 38:3 (Parallel theme): Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

Acts 20:27 (Parallel theme): For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Acts 20:20 (Parallel theme): And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

Exodus 3:12 (Parallel theme): And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

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