

Jeremiah 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

God's response to Jeremiah's objection is direct and authoritative: 'Say not, I am a child.' The Hebrew construction is emphatic—an absolute prohibition against the self-disqualifying excuse. God doesn't validate Jeremiah's felt inadequacy or suggest he gain more experience first; He simply forbids the objection. The command that follows establishes the principle of prophetic ministry: 'for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.' The prophet's responsibility is obedience, not evaluating whether he feels qualified. The verb 'go' (halak, הָלַךְ) indicates movement, initiative, mission—prophets must actively pursue their divinely appointed audiences. 'All that I shall send thee' emphasizes comprehensive obedience without selecting comfortable audiences or convenient messages. The phrase 'whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak' establishes that prophetic proclamation is divine message delivery, not personal opinion. The prophet must speak exactly what God commands—no additions, subtractions, or modifications based on audience response or personal preference. This defines biblical prophecy as revelatory (God reveals what to say) and obligatory (the prophet must say it).

Historical Context

This verse establishes the prophetic office's nature: complete obedience to divine commission regardless of personal feelings, audience hostility, or message difficulty. Throughout his ministry, Jeremiah demonstrated this principle—he

prophesied unpopular messages (submit to Babylon), confronted powerful audiences (kings, priests, false prophets), and persevered despite persecution (beaten, imprisoned, thrown in cistern, rejected by family). Later, when tempted to quit because of opposition, Jeremiah testified that God's word became 'a burning fire shut up in my bones' he could not contain (Jeremiah 20:9). The New Testament applies this principle to all Christian witness—we are ambassadors delivering Christ's message, not our own (2 Corinthians 5:20). The authority of Scripture itself depends on this prophetic pattern: biblical authors wrote not their private interpretations but what the Spirit moved them to record (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does God's command to Jeremiah challenge our tendency to let feelings of inadequacy excuse us from obedience to clear callings?
2. What does the requirement to speak 'whatsoever I command thee' teach about faithful Christian witness versus tailoring messages for audience acceptance?

Interlinear Text

תָּאַמֵּן	יְהֹוָה	אֶל	אֶל	תָּאַמֵּן	בָּעֵר	אָנָּכִי	כָּפֵר
said	But the LORD	H413	H408	said	not I am a child	H595	H3588

אֲשֶׁר כָּל תְּלַבֵּשׁ אֲשֶׁר כָּל יְאַתָּה
to all that I shall send H1980 H853 H3605 H834

תִּתְּבֹרְךָ אֶת־
thee and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak
H6680 H1696

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 22:20 (Parallel theme): And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

Matthew 28:20 (Parallel theme): Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Ezekiel 3:27 (References Lord): But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

1 Kings 22:14 (References Lord): And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

2 Chronicles 18:13 (References Lord): And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.

Numbers 22:38 (Parallel theme): And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.

