

Jeremiah 17:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee.

Analysis

Jeremiah defends his prophetic integrity against accusation that he desired the judgment he proclaimed. "I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee" indicates his reluctance—he didn't eagerly pursue the prophet's role or rush to pronounce doom. The Hebrew *ro'eh* (רֹעֶה, pastor/shepherd) emphasizes his pastoral concern for the flock, even while announcing judgment.

"Neither have I desired the woeful day" proves Jeremiah's heart aligned with God's—not delighting in judgment but grieving over its necessity (cf. Ezek 18:23, 33:11). True prophets never relish pronouncing doom; they share God's heart that longs for repentance. "Thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee" appeals to divine omniscience—God knows Jeremiah's motives and the faithfulness of his message.

This verse models faithful ministry that balances truth-telling with compassion. Reformed pastors must proclaim both law and gospel without softening hard truths, yet never with vindictive pleasure in others' judgment. Like Jeremiah, Christ wept over Jerusalem while pronouncing its doom (Luke 19:41-44). Authentic ministry combines unflinching truth with pastoral love.

Historical Context

False prophets distinguished themselves by popular, comfortable messages that pleased their audiences (Mic 2:11, Jer 5:31). Jeremiah's unpopular message of certain judgment made him suspect—people assumed he hated his nation or desired its downfall. His emotional anguish over Judah's condition is evident throughout his prophecies (Jer 4:19-21, 8:18-9:1, 13:17), demonstrating his pastoral heart despite his stern warnings.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you balance speaking difficult truths with maintaining pastoral compassion for those who need to hear them?
2. What motivates your witness—genuine concern for others' spiritual welfare or satisfaction in being proved right?
3. In what ways does Christ exemplify the perfect combination of truth-telling and compassionate love?

Interlinear Text

וְאֲנִי י' H589	לֹא H3808	אֶצְתִּין H213	מֵרַעָה H7462	אֲחֲרַי יֵךְ H310	יּוֹם H3117
		As for me I have not hastened	from being a pastor	to follow	day
וְשׁ H605	לֹא H3808	הִתְאַוֵּי יְתִי H183	אֶתְּ H859	יָדָעְתָּ H3045	
the woeful		thee neither have I desired		thou knowest	
מוֹצֵא H4161	שִׁפְתַי י' H8193	נֶכַח H5227	פָּנֶי יֵךְ H6440	הִנֵּה: H1961	
that which came out	of my lips	was right before	thee		

Additional Cross-References

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,

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