

Jeremiah 20:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

Analysis

This verse begins one of Scripture's most shocking passages—Jeremiah cursing the day of his birth. The intensity is stark: 'Cursed be the day wherein I was born' (arur hayom, אָרוּר הַיּוֹם). This is covenant curse language (Deuteronomy 27-28) applied to his own birth. The parallel negative command 'let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed' (barukh, בָּרוּךְ) continues the curse. This lament expresses profound anguish—not suicidal ideation (he doesn't curse his life now, but his birth then) but existential despair over suffering's meaning. Jeremiah's brutal honesty is remarkable; Scripture doesn't sanitize the prophet's struggle. Job expressed similar anguish (Job 3:1-11), as did Elijah (1 Kings 19:4). This demonstrates that even faithful, godly people can experience seasons of deep despair. God doesn't condemn Jeremiah for this expression; instead, it's preserved in Scripture as authentic lament. The Psalms are filled with similar honest cries (Psalm 22, 88). This teaches that faith can coexist with pain, that honesty with God about our struggles is appropriate, and that God is big enough to handle our questions and complaints.

Historical Context

This lament follows immediately after Jeremiah's torture by Pashur and reflects accumulated decades of rejection, persecution, and seeing his prophecies dismissed. Jeremiah had prophesied for over 40 years, watching Judah spiral toward destruction while his warnings were ignored. He had been forbidden to marry (16:2), faced constant opposition, was arrested (37:15), thrown into a

cistern (38:6), and saw his message rejected by kings, priests, prophets, and people. The emotional toll of faithful ministry in hostile environment is captured in this raw lament. Historical context helps understand the depth of Jeremiah's despair: he knew Jerusalem's destruction was coming, that his people would suffer horribly, that his life's work appeared to be failure. Yet despite this despair, Jeremiah continued prophesying—the book continues for 32 more chapters. This demonstrates that feelings of despair don't negate calling or disqualify from service. God sustained Jeremiah through this darkness, as He sustained Elijah, Job, and countless others. The church's recognition of 'dark night of the soul' experiences reflects this biblical reality.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What does Jeremiah's honest expression of despair teach us about the compatibility of deep faith with profound emotional struggle?
2. How does Scripture's preservation of this lament (rather than editing it out) encourage believers who face seasons of darkness and questioning?
3. In what ways does Jeremiah's continued ministry despite this despair model perseverance in calling even when we feel emotionally and spiritually depleted?

Interlinear Text

אָר וֹר	יֹם	אֶשֶׁר	בִּי	יֹם	אֶשֶׁר	יְלִד תְּנִי
Cursed	be the day		bare	be the day		bare
H779	H3117	H834	H0	H3117	H834	H3205
	אִמִּי	אֶל	יְהִי	בְּרוּךְ:		
wherein my mother			me be blessed			
H517	H408	H1961		H1288		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 15:10 (Curse): Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me.