

Jeremiah 20:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.

Analysis

This startling verse opens Jeremiah's most anguished confession, where the prophet accuses God of deceiving him into prophetic ministry. The Hebrew pathah (פָּתָה) can mean 'enticed,' 'persuaded,' or 'deceived'—the same word used for seduction. Jeremiah feels God overpowered him, and now he suffers mockery and derision daily for proclaiming God's word.

This raw honesty reveals the prophet's humanity and demonstrates that authentic relationship with God allows for genuine lament. Jeremiah is not sinning by expressing his pain; he is wrestling honestly with God like Job, David in the Psalms, and even Christ in Gethsemane. The prophet's complaint arises from the tension between his divine calling and its devastating personal cost—social isolation, physical persecution, and the agony of watching his beloved nation reject both him and his message.

Reformed theology recognizes that God's sovereignty and human experience of suffering can coexist without contradiction. God did not literally deceive Jeremiah, but from the prophet's limited human perspective, the overwhelming difficulty of his calling felt like divine entrapment. This passage assures suffering saints that God welcomes our honest cries and that feeling overwhelmed by His purposes does not constitute unfaithfulness. The key is that Jeremiah brings his complaint to God rather than abandoning Him.

Historical Context

This confession occurs after Jeremiah's public humiliation by Pashhur the priest, who had him beaten and placed in stocks at the Benjamin Gate (20:1-2). Jeremiah's message that Jerusalem would fall to Babylon was viewed as treason by political leaders and blasphemy by religious authorities. Unlike earlier prophets who occasionally faced opposition, Jeremiah endured decades of sustained persecution with no vindication during his lifetime. This historical reality makes his continued faithfulness all the more remarkable.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jeremiah's honest complaint before God model healthy spiritual practice during seasons of suffering?
2. What does this passage teach us about the cost of faithful ministry when God's message contradicts cultural expectations?
3. In what ways might we, like Jeremiah, feel 'deceived' when following God leads to unexpected hardship rather than blessing?

Interlinear Text

וְאָפַּת	יְהוָה	וְאָפַּת	חֲזַקְתָּ נִי
me and I was deceived	O LORD	me and I was deceived	thou art stronger
H6601	H3068	H6601	H2388
וַתִּגְבַּר	הִיא יָדִי	לְשִׁחוּק	כָּל הַיּוֹם
than I and hast prevailed	H1961	I am in derision	daily
H3201		H7814	H3605 H3117
לְכָל אֶחָד	לִי:		
every one mocketh	H0		
H3932			

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 9:7 (Parallel theme): The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.

Lamentations 3:14 (Parallel theme): I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day.

Jeremiah 20:9 (Parallel theme): Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

Ezekiel 3:14 (References Lord): So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.