**BCM Bible Study – August 30/31, 2017**

**Jeremiah: Introduction (Jeremiah 1)**

Background

*Jeremiah was a prophet to Judah, the southern kingdom of the nation of Israel, from 627-586 BC. His ministry to Judah took place during what would end up being Judah’s last years before being overtaken by Babylon and their king Nebuchadnezzar. When God called Jeremiah, he was a young man, likely from a priestly line, who lived in a small town outside of Jerusalem. He was called to prophesy to Judah during the reign of its last good, God-honoring king (Josiah) and served for about 40 years. After Josiah, the kings of Judah refused to turn away from idolatry despite Jeremiah’s pleading – this failure to repent and ignore God’s law would lead to their downfall. It is important to note that Jeremiah is not always chronological; rather, Jeremiah wrote and compiled his prophecies together with his scribe (Baruch).*

*Here are some important themes that you will see as we walk through Jeremiah:*

* *Jeremiah could be called the “persevering prophet” because his ministry is marked by ‘failure’ – Judah never heeded his prophecies. In this, we see God as the caller, equipper and sustainer of his servants. Also, we see ministerial ‘failure’ redefined in terms of obeying the Lord.*
* *God’s seriousness about sin (especially idolatry), but his sovereignty in upholding his covenant and seeing that it comes to fruition*
* *God saves those who repent and turn to him; God’s determinedly pursues despite continued unfaithfulness*
* *God as the ultimate judge, king, and priest*

God Calls Jeremiah:

* Have you ever experienced a time when you sensed God calling you to something for which you felt unequipped? Why did you feel unequipped? How did you eventually respond?
* **Read Jeremiah 1:1-10**
  + What is God calling Jeremiah to do and what is his response?
  + How does God respond to Jeremiah’s fears?
  + Though God’s encouragement is addressed specifically to Jeremiah, we can find similar promises to all of God’s children elsewhere in Scripture: **Read Psalm 139:13-14** and **Luke 12:11-12**.
    - How do these promises/truths shape the way you think about and live out your faith? Be as specific as possible.
    - What promises of God have been most encouraging to you as you have followed him? Why do you think some truths are hard to believe/internalize? Which ones are hard for you to believe/internalize? (Are there any that you know are true but struggle to believe/internalize? – original q)
* **Read Jeremiah 1:11-16**
  + Here, God gives two illustrations. The first (11-12) depends on a pun in the Hebrew. The almond (saqed) was an illusion to God’s watching over his word (soqed).
    - Based on this encouragement from God and the previous ones, what do you think was Jeremiah’s fundamental mistake in the way he thought about his ministry?
    - Why is it hard trust that God in the midst of answering his calling?
  + What do you learn about the message of Jeremiah’s prophecy in vs. 13-16?
    - Why is God going to punish his people?
    - Do you struggle with this aspect of God’s character? Why or why not?
    - What is the relationship between God’s punishment and justice? How does this magnify the importance of the cross?
* **Read Jeremiah 1:17-19**
  + What about God’s calling on Jeremiah’s life is so difficult?
  + If God called you to this sort of ministry (one where people would rebel against you), what would be the hardest thing about saying ‘yes’?

**Conclusion:**

What do you think it looks like today to follow Jesus knowing that you will be unaccepted by the world and persecuted?

Do you feel like you have already experienced this in some ways?

How can we encourage each other as believers and as a community as we seek to follow Jesus while the world will oppose us?