

“I knew You”

By Pastor Edgar F. Solís

Introduction:

A nation in Africa was in big turmoil, oppression, and war for many years. Then an activist and member of different organizations and parties led both peaceful protests and armed resistance against the minority's oppressive regime in a racially divided South Africa.

His actions landed him in prison for nearly three decades and made him the face of the anti-apartheid movement both within his country and internationally.

Nelson Mandela was released in 1990, then he participated in the eradication of apartheid and in 1994 became the first black president of South Africa, forming a multiethnic government to oversee the country's transition.

After retiring from politics in 1999, he remained a devoted champion for peace and social justice in his own nation and around the world until his death in 2013 at the age of 95.

When a big crisis arises, human history has shown us that people of great courage can make a difference.

Men and women can cause a big change in the course of history.

The scriptures also have plenty of stories and characters that can help us to imagine that hope is a powerful element that can change hard reality.

Come with me to learn from a suffering but bold prophet: Jeremiah

Context:

The era that produced the book of Jeremiah was a time of turmoil and upheaval.

Jeremiah's time was hard, with political, social, military, and religious disruptions.

Scholars tell us that the book describes a time of invasions, deportations, and sieges.

During this time, the capital city fell, the city walls broke down, and enemies killed many people, leveled the king's palace, and destroyed the temple.

The invasion of the country and the physical destruction of the city also shattered ordinary domestic, social, and economic life.

Above all, the nation's collapse put into question Judah's relationships with God.

Christian author Kathleen M. O'Connor says in her book, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise*, that, "for the nation of Judah, these events brought to the brink of extinction."

In this scenario, the prophet speaks many oracles and sermons, and he prays. But most important is that Jeremiah was a person who experienced human pain with his people.

Jeremiah preaches not from the platform of a religious leader. He preaches from his own suffering.

The reading of this passage in Jeremiah helped me to identify five simple but powerful principles based on the narrative of the Bible text.

1. God's call to Jeremiah happened in the year that Jerusalem was taken into exile.

The world, and our community, are experiencing hard times in different ways. As Jeremiah, we must be aware of what is happening in our community, our city, and the world. This awareness is not just to acquire information or knowledge. It has nothing to do with watching the news on TV as we are drinking and eating some Cheetos, and then going to bed with indifference. Awareness involves an active consciousness of the implications and the impact of what is happening and empathizing with the pain and suffering of people!

2. The Bible recounts that God set a plan for the prophet even before he was born!

The spiritual presence of the eternal was in the prophet. In this regard, we need to consider that faith in God is necessary. I have found a very interesting quote about God's reality in our lives:

“God is not discoverable or demonstrable by purely scientific means, unfortunately for the scientifically minded. But that really proves nothing. It simply means that the wrong instruments are being used for the job.” From J. B. Phillips writing in *For This Day*.

I have found that if I want to experience God in my life, I need to be sensible of God’s presence. I need to be open and willing to “see” God in my life, and in the world. How willing and open are you to experiencing a new life with God?

3. Jeremiah said, “Hold it, Master GOD! Look at me. I don’t know anything. I’m only a boy!”

God’s presence in our lives could sound scary and challenging and we tend to make excuses for not listening to God. Dear friend, if you hear something or feel something that honors God and is good for others, there is no doubt that God is calling you!

4. The prophet also said, “GOD told me...Don’t be afraid of a soul. I’ll be right there, looking after you.”

Dear friend, God is present with you always. We can be aware of God’s presence during the most challenging times of our lives! How can you be sure that God is with you? Explore the hardest moments of your life and find that energy, that love, that courage that made you succeed. There is God’s presence. Because God knows us so intimately, God is always on our side.

5. At the end of the Jeremiah Bible passage, we read what God said to this prophet.

“I’ve given you a job to do among nations and governments—a red-letter day!

Your job is to pull up and tear down, take apart and demolish, and then start over, building and planting.” God’s presence always involves an exciting responsibility that represents the good for all people. Is not always just about you!

In the same way that God is present in me and you, God is also present in every human being!

Today God is calling us to see God's face, presence, and power in the other – in your mom, in your daughter, in your neighbor, in the homeless person, in the one that is totally different from you.

At the beginning of my message, I shared with you just a little glimpse of Nelson Mandela.

Dear Friends, we all have role models to follow, and Nelson Mandela was an inspiration to millions. Through his speeches, he influenced many for the better.

Hear what Mandela said once: “Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.”

Jeremiah was a prophet of uncertainties, suffering, and falls, but nothing can change the reality expressed in his book: God was always on his side, and God was present in the darkest moments of his life and ministry.

Today, we all are invited to believe and experience God's presence.

Amid all challenges and hard moments, God is with you.

You are loved, you are precious, you are important, and you have a purpose and a mission from God!

Amen!