

# The Compulsive Force in the Ministry (Jer. 20:7-13)

## Charles Feinberg

Announcer:

This morning it is our great pleasure to have speaking with us Dr. Charles Feinberg Dr. Feinberg was the first dean of Talbot seminary. But more than that he is a scholar. He has an outstanding expository of the Word of God. He's a man who loves the Lord and who has proclaimed the Gospel Jesus Christ. For many years I think of some of the great servants that we've had in our day. Dr. Feinberg's right at the top. He's a personal friend a lovely man. Let's welcome Dr. Charles Feinberg to this college.

Feinberg:

Thank you. I feel the same way about you too. This is a real joy to be here. Talbot Theological Seminary and especially to compliment all of you ladies and gentlemen on your good judgment in your choice of a seminary. Long ago many times in seminary after returning from ministry away from the school I would indicate to the students that I had been out and I'd been looking for a more knowledgeable more understanding and all around fit subjects for the Ministry more than our students beyond our students. And I said I hadn't found any yet. And I

said that day I do find it I will report to you faithfully my report this morning is I haven't found such a group yet. So you're still way ahead of whatever second. This morning I want to speak on something that is very very dear to my heart. In fact pivotal I want to speak on the compulsive force in the ministry the compulsive force in the ministry will you turn with me in the Word of God to the twentieth chapter of Jeremiah some choice seven verses in poetic form there verse seven to thirteen.

It's a complaint of Jeremiah and if you've been in seminary very long at all you have a complaint one way or another. Classes are too long or too short. Some of the professors are not good looking enough. I so many are looking at me already or this out or the other. But it goes with the territory as they say it's par for the course and yet there are folk coming for training in the Ministry of the word reminded of the story of a little fellow asked his mom [inaudible] I be a preacher when I grow up. Well his mother said of course you may my son if you want to. Oh he says yes I want to. I suppose I've got to go to church all my life anyway. And it's a good deal harder to sit still and to stand up and holler. I trust that's not the reason any one of you ladies or gentlemen is here because if you do stand up and holler it can give you laryngitis to say nothing about headaches and the like Jeremiah twenty verses seven to thirteen the compulsive force in the ministry. The most transparent the most lifelike picture of any prophet in all the grand galaxy of the inspired word is Jeremiah.

He is honest. The world would say even to a fault. One day he was so honest that he even likened God in the 15th chapter to a deceptive stream with water that's unreliable and you may read the next part of it. The Lord said if you don't take that back you can't talk to God like that if you don't take that back. You're out of the Ministry for good and don't be afraid. Mind you have a great deal of opposition but you'll not be running to your opposers they'll be coming to you and

I will vindicate you. Here in the 20th chapter. The compulsive force in the ministry this passage has been described as a classic been described as one of the most powerful impressive passages in the whole of prophetic literature. Not only goes into the depths of the prophet's soul but into the secrets of the prophetic consciousness what it was that motivated and actuated impelled and compelled and propelled them the psychology of prophecy finds nothing more instructive than here and you should take as your wonderful example the one after whom the seminar is named Dr. Lewis T.

Talbot just returned. Tomorrow will be a week from Paris not France Paris Texas where he ministered. He was there at the first congressional church I saw it's now called the Paris Bible Church. It was there that he was ordained by Dr. S.I. Scofield along with a Hebrew believer. They used to call Daddy Flacks, Joseph Flacks. What a preacher he was. He didn't just preach a sermon. He was his sermon. So much so that when he got before the mic and he started all the Ministry of radio of the Church of the open door and other offshoots of radio ministry ours included for numbers of years over 30 some years when he preached he was the message. He was so on fire with it that it pervaded and permeated his whole being and he was the distraction of all those who tried to put it on the air. So they finally decided to give him a dead Mic and he could do with it whatever he wanted and put the live one quite away from him.

But he had his message never forget when he went out on his first trip on missions never forget how he preached on hell in the heart. Hell in the home and hell in the hereafter. What a preacher. He was. What a great man of God. So he left us a great heritage of preaching he could no more stop preaching than he could stop breathing. That was the way with Jeremiah. It was one of the principles of the Spurgeon College in London who said this twentieth chapter of Jeremiah is a unique psychological passage in all canonical prophecy a passage tremendous with

feeling and we have here a soul that's laid bare the three simple truths here around which all the passage revolves first of all the focal point of the call. C A L L.

I was interested to find how some folk had come along when our school was seeking the accreditation that belonged to us. We were a numbers of meetings with the ATF association theological schools is called now and it was interesting to see over a period of years how some of even the liberal schools were coming away from the concept of the ministry as a profession coming away from that to more biblical terminology concept that the ministry was a calling no question about it was that way with Moses that way with Joshua that way with Samuel that way with Paul read the first chapters of John our Lord was busy with what calling calling them into the ministry of the word. Jeremiah when he was called wasn't running after the job. In fact he complains. Oh Lord. Here it is. O Lord Thou hast deceived me and I was deceived.

Probably a better translation is oh Lord thou hast persuaded me and I was persuaded you don't talk to God just on any terms. O Lord thou hast deceived me and I was deceived. Thou hast overcome me and prevailed. I've become a laughingstock all day long. Notice the adverbial expression every one mocks me didn't have a friend to his soul but each time I speak I cry out I proclaim violence and destruction you no smooth things no Pink teas and that kind of affair I proclaim violence and destruction because for me the word of the Lord has resulted in reproach and derision all day long but if I say I will not remember him or speak any more in his name then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones and I'm weary of holding it in I cannot endure it. The compulsive force in the ministry for I've heard the whispering of many terror on every side denounce him Yes.

Let us denounce him oh my trusted friends watching for my fall say perhaps he will be deceived so that we may prevail against him and take our revenge on him but the Lord is with me like a dread champion therefore my persecutors will stumble and not prevail they will be utterly shame because they failed with an everlasting disgrace that will not be forgotten yet oh Lord of hosts thou doest test the righteous who seest the mind and the heart Let me see thy vengeance on them for to thee I have set forth my cause. Then the beautiful word of praise sing to the Lord Praise the Lord for he has delivered the soul of the needy one from the hand of evil doers. Jeremiah here is remonstrating with God. He's arguing with God as Elijah did. I'm not better than my father. I had a professor who was assistant to Scofield years ago at the Scofield church. He would get to that point and he'd say did he say I'm not better than my father's who ever said he was.

But we think we have an edge on God and he couldn't do without us. Well here's one of the most revealing confessions. Here's a prayer that shows the tremendous cost. Anyone who gives you a picture of the ministry has a sort of a 30 day trip in Hawaii. Why anybody would want to stay there 30 days I don't know a little shorter would be sufficient I've been there but it is not that kind of a picnic. It's dead in earnest. We are in a world struggle for souls between God and Satan and we know what side we're on. Terrible personal cost. Jeremiah as he spoke that word placed on him. You've persuaded me. Now the word is deceived in some contexts. But you know as well as I do that you don't get the meaning of a word just out of the lexicon and its first usage. You get it from the totality of usage in the Bible. This one means you over-persuaded me you oversold me because the beginning of the first chapter he said I'm a youth, can't speak.

God said I chose you just he said of Paul. I chose you before you ever saw the light of day. While yet you were in the body of your mother. He's complaining bitterly against the divine

call and compulsion. He calls it here enticement. He said he didn't come to the prophetic office on his own initiative. This hasn't been something that I thought up myself he'd been called. He'd even resisted it until the Lord overcame his natural reluctance. He says you're stronger than I certainly are. You have persuaded me; thou hast overcome me and prevailed. The prophets did not speak of their own will or their own volition. I want this I want that actually God had not deceived him. If you will read on in the first chapter of Jeremiah the eighteenth verse. God had told him every single thing that was going to transpire.

You're going to have troubles here. You're going to be ministering as a minister to the nations; he had oracles against the nations. But he said they are not going to prevail against you you are going to be as a brazen wall against them. You're going to be as a pillar you will overcome. God had not deceived him. It's been well said. If a trouble must be faced it need not be anticipated. Some poor folk are always living in hope it doesn't happen. Hope it doesn't happen. Hope it doesn't happen sufficient unto the day as the evil thereof. Every day has enough trouble of its own. If God hides approaching trouble from us he doesn't forget to provide against it. There's no question of the call of this great prophet. He was keenly conscious of it. There's no minister worthy of the name. No missionary no teacher no servant of Christ man or woman worthy of the name that has not been called to that sacred office of preaching teaching the redeeming grace of our Lord Jesus.

I think you're aware that one of the most influential men in Great Britain was Lord Beaver Brooke. It was only within recent years that I came across this account of his. He owned the London Daily Express along with a number of other daily papers. He was the son of a preacher. He had made a fortune in Canada. And then he went on to England. He forged ahead made money and a name for himself some years afterwards. He was elevated to the peerage

made a Lord in England. Then he wrote the evangelist and the preacher. That one is the man who has the greatest opportunity for doing good. And if I were in a position to influence the life of a sincere young man today what do you think it is that keeps your teachers here your professors here said Beaver Brook. If I were in a position to influence the life of a sincere young man today I would say to him rather choose to be a preacher than a cabinet minister or a millionaire.

Said he when I was a young man. I pitied my father for being a poor man and a humble preacher of the word. Now that I am old I envy him his life and his career. Only God can make a preacher. It's by his enabling call as with the prophet Jeremiah. But the call is the beginning of the story. It's not the end of it. It's not the middle of it. There is a conflict and that's clear all through Jeremiah. Can you imagine aristocratic Isaiah in the courts in Jerusalem? Highly respected now. Can you imagine anybody coming up and laying hands on him or accusing him of treason or putting him in the stocks or throwing him in a pit out of which the water had been drained dried up. Listen all this happened to Jeremiah the conflict. What hurt him most? He was from the tribe of Benjamin. He came from a Levitical city of Anathoth not far from Jerusalem. It has the name in it Anat so its name is an old name coming down from Canaanite dwellers that were there before Abraham came in doubtless. So here he is from Anathoth. And in addition to all the opposition he had.

He finds out one day that some of his worst enemies were those of his not just his people around Anathoth, his fellow citizens there but his own family. They said that fellow is persona non grata. That means Mr. Nobody. We don't want you. They would have nothing to do with him. That hurt him. Worst of all. What's the conflict? Well it's spelled out with such clarity here in Jeremiah 20 and throughout the book of Jeremiah. As I said Jeremiah is probably the most transparent of all the prophets. The Lord wouldn't allow him to go to a wedding and he said well

maybe. Maybe I could be of some help at a funeral the Lord said no I don't want you to go to a funeral. He was supposed to be strictly by himself. No prophet was commissioned to a life of ease. Least of all Jeremiah think of the physical persecution this [inaudible] that second "h" should be a rough "h". This fellow was a rough fellow. His name means in the intensive. When it occurs twice in the Old Testament in a verb means to turn pieces he was ready to tear Jeremiah apart. He was the warden the chief officer of the House of the Lord had taken its toll.

When this fellow laid his hands. We read Pashur had Jeremiah the prophet beaten put him in the stocks that were at the upper Benjamin gate which was by the House of the Lord took its toll on this dear man of God. Alone before God now he just breaks down utterly. Now we're going to see what really motivates him. What makes this man tick? To realize Jeremiah's mental condition. Remember he'd spent a day in physical torture. He's distraught. He's overtaxed strong measures and persecutions that were taken against him. That temple Warden his agony was so intense. If this were just a secondary matter with him he could have thrown it off but this is his very heart and life. Then he crushes the very day of his birth. That's in this 20th chapter. Right after the portion that I read verses 14 to 18 just as Job cursed the day of his birth. So he. His enemies had plotted against him before but this was the first time anybody had dared to lay hands on the person of a man of God [inaudible] knew what that was.

Others have the outcome [inaudible] here. Jeremiah suffered the complaint probably took place during the night of what man would say was his apparent worst failure words could have been uttered too when he was in the stocks reproach heaped up again and again unrelieved unremitting more than his sensitive spirit could take he was real, he was ridiculed he was laughed at verse seven and eight they'd laugh at him. Everyone mocks me every time I speak I cry aloud. I proclaim violence of destruction. And he says I'm not going to remember God

anymore. I'm not going to be preaching ridiculed continually. Did you notice this all day long verse seven and universally everyone mocks me. Well they deride him for one thing being faithful to the message that God had given him only because of his preaching was he ridiculed was the Word of God through him was made a reproach he never preached a message. But what they found fault. Some people are always objecting. I think they were born in the objective case and wouldn't want to be declined in any other. He never preached a message but what they found fault. They criticized the manner of his preaching. He cried out. He doesn't speak quietly enough for us. It's really rough on the eardrums.

They were put out over his lively delivery. They criticized the subject of his preaching cried violence and spoil rebuke their sins to one another [inaudible] was once finding fault with the level of the tone of the speech of a minister of God who was preaching so earnestly. He says why don't you quiet down. He said my dear friends when I was just a boy a man fell into a gravel pit and the man who saw it screamed so loud that they heard him for miles away. And why shouldn't I lift my voice when there are souls going to eternal perdition. He rebuked their sins. Punishment that awaited them. There were schemes against his life. They wanted to report him as a dangerous individual to the authorities FBI. No. Number one dangerous number one on the FBI list. His enemies conceived to spy him out take revenge on him. And they called him what he had called Pashur. He says your name is Pashur but it's going to be changed. It'll be more according to what you do and your occupation.

You are a terror round about [inaudible Hebrew] so they're calling Jeremiah that you're a terror round about how shall I put that in modern English terror roundabout. You're an all-round terror didn't care. That's God's word. Use his own phrase against him persecuted by spies enemies by the number his familiar acquaintances wouldn't and couldn't be trusted. It was by

secret devices too not out in the open. He was touched with untruth constant ever alert and he says God's judgment on you is gonna be all the greater the more [inaudible] you are the more severe the judgment. If we think Jeremiah alone in a state of discouragement remember Moses was he said Lord this people who now has forgotten thou hast begotten and the Lord said they're your people. Remember at Sinai they had said all the Lord is going to say we're going to do. They hadn't even heard it that that was the nineteenth chapter in the 24th.

They had heard it and they said all the Lord has spoken [inaudible Hebrew] we will do and we will hear. And you know how marvelous they were before Moses ever came down with the Ten Commandments. They had only broken the first two. They'd broken the first two before he ever came down. That's man who has confidence in himself. No they couldn't keep it and if anybody in the world could ever keep nine of them he never could keep the tenth. That's the one that tripped up Paul in Romans seven. Nobody could keep the Ten Commandments except the Lord Jesus Christ himself. So Jeremiah the tremendous time of conflict prophecy someone as well said has its Gethsemanes and its Golgotha. There's no limit to the variety of objections that some folk will have. Some will say. You don't start the service up this way. Former pastor did you don't preach in such a fashion. You don't use words that I like and so forth and so on. Dr. Lynn G. Broughton used to be at the Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta Georgia quite an area we've been there.

He had been a medical man before and he preceded Dear Dr. Will Hutten who was later President of the Moody Bible Institute. Dr. Hutten had earlier been a circus clown or in the circus. Anyhow but God mightily used him when he was saved. Broughton said I remember a few years ago when I had not so much experience as I have now. And that does help when my enthusiasm perhaps was not as well balanced as it is now I'd been invited to preach in the

summer for one of the leading churches in one of our great cities. I went to the pulpit one on that Sunday morning conscious that God was with us in a very peculiar sense and when it's there you'll know it when the presence of God is there when he's there to bless you'll know it. And when I finished my sermon the one thing on my mind was salvation. I didn't know whether they had ever had an invitation given there for the confession of Christ openly. But I didn't stop to ask. I stepped down at the close of the sermon on a little sub platform extended an invitation anybody who wanted to accept the Lord Jesus Christ right then and there to come to the front. Immediately that his invitation words were concluded. A strong able bodied man got up. Tears streaming down his face came to the front took Lynn Broughton Dr. Lynn Broughton by the hand.

Then another came 14 adults confessed Christ that morning. Said doctor Broughton when I was going out of the church the wife of one of the officers of the church also a Sunday school teacher if you please said to another officer she said I do think that a visiting minister to a church ought have manners enough at least to conform to the ordinary order of the service whatever that might be. He asked her what she meant she said. I greatly enjoyed that man's sermon until the end. But I don't think that a man should dis-arrange the order of the service of the church for the sake of having a few people come to the front as he did this morning. You know who the man was the first man who came forward with tears streaming down his face. This is a true account. That man was an engineer. He was killed in a wreck that very Sunday night. My dear friends you better be more concerned about what God thinks than what men do. The Talmud tells of a very very learned rabbi. And there was always like a father son relationship.

So when it came to die they said oh father light of our life. Teacher of the truth. What will be the last word that you want to counsel us with and they were amazed at his statement

after they thought it over they realized it was profound. He said May the fear of God always loom as large in your lives as the fear of men. And what our Lord says in John. Pharisees wouldn't believe on him because it meant more to go according to the desires and dictates of the crowd the crowd. So we have the call we have the conflict is the end of the story no the compulsion compulsion force in the ministry in verse nine.

There you have it. But if I say and you thought it over if but if I say I will not remember him or speak any more in his name I'm quitting the ministry I'm quitting it once and for all. Then in my heart underscore that it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones like a high fever and I'm weary of holding it in I cannot endure it. Yes there is a most vivid account of the intense divine pressure with regard to the conviction of duty, sense of God's pressing upon him in the work I couldn't do it I couldn't remain silent. Subject is an express must be the word of God which is held back. Yes. He himself had said God's word is as a fire it's hammer that breaketh the Rock in pieces. God's word burns up every opposing force it always has it will even more clearly than that devilish burning up of the 007 by the diabolical attack oh his present attitude to God's word he doesn't say.

Why didn't you give me something worthwhile to speak so people would receive it? They would ask for it they would welcome it they would encourage me to keep on preaching. No he can't suppress it without torturing pain he's compelled by the inner power of that word of God to utter the message he's received. Amos said so. I am empowered I'm energized by the Spirit of God to declare unto Israel its sins. Dear friends unless a man, still true, unless a man is impelled by the Spirit of God. Unless you count the cost you are prepared to risk everything for God unless you are prepared to face unpopularity. I was in a physician's office. Yesterday with my wife and I mentioned his name I said I had a professor years ago who had that name. Oh he says

it's a very very common name. Eitan which is a Hebrew word meaning strong or perennial of streams and so on. And I asked him [inaudible Hebrew], were you born in the land of Israel said yes and so on. And he he said Oh I see you speak Hebrew he says we have another doctor here who speaks Hebrew as well. And then he said where do you go to the synagogue. I said [inaudible Hebrew]; I am a Hebrew who believes in the Messiah.

He says were you at the synagogue on the Day of Atonement. I said I have an everlasting atonement. He didn't like it very much his nose was a bit out of joint but I thought if mine was his could be too. Not everybody can have strong Anglo-Saxon features. I say unless you're ready to suffer some unpopularity social contempt and persecution unless you know what it is to suffer for with Christ. It's been said it's a question as to whether we ever have a moral right to speak in that most holy name. And if the all mastering motive be absent said one if the love of Christ constrain us not how can his desires and his doings be such as the unseen judge will either approve or bless he'd failed to realize the implications of his office but God knew them and God was ready there to undergird him, sustain him, says so in the 18th and 19th verses of the first chapter. Thou hast persuaded me I like that translation better because of the context and usage thou hast persuaded me and I was persuaded you over persuaded me you overpowered me.

I was oversold I was reluctant from the first but of the hour of discouragement. He found God faithful to keep him in the Ministry of the word he must speak and no wonder there were those in the time of our Lord Jesus. They didn't consider the Lord Jesus might be the messiah. But some of them thought he might even be Jeremiah. Jeremiah is parallel to our Lord Jesus in that both prophesied concerning the destruction of the temple. Isaiah didn't have to do that. Sennacherib got his comeuppance at 701 B.C. and he was the one that said don't you know so and so and so and so and so and so have gone down under the rod. How dare you oppose

Sennacherib you know what happened? One hundred and eighty five thousand died that night. You remember that without anybody lifting a finger. [Inaudible] They say it was a bubonic plague.

All I can say it's the most intelligent bubonic plague in the world. It could differentiate between an Assyrian and one of Israel he's got to speak. Powerful internal impetus to keep him at his duty when he tries to divest himself of the prophetic vocation. He found that impossible. There was an impulse with it. He could no more do it than cease breathing and still live. Burn like a fire threaten to consume him unless he were relieved. And in over fifty years of ministry among seminary students. I can say they are the kind that God calls today too. I've seen some of them they've lost jobs sometimes even their families they've lost the consent and the approbation of their loved ones back home mothers and father. But they've gone on and God is on it. God says I will honor him that honors me. Burning like a fire the burning fire of inspiration. You've heard it before. I'm sure that great men do not hold truth. Truth holds them. That's a compulsion of utterance.

Jeremiah isn't dealing with cold doctrines and abstract dogmas not insignificant religious notions not even philosophical answers to curious questions of little or no practical value. God's man can never keep silent and the words satisfy the prophet's intellect directed his will. Someone had said illuminated his understanding controlled his emotions purified his motives. He was taught the word obeyed the word and then only did he begin to proclaim the Word. You can't proclaim it unless you have it. A lot of folks say they didn't go to seminary. I said I know I've heard him, I've heard him, and he sounds like he hasn't been there either. Jeremiah wanted to desist from preaching more than anything else that he couldn't do the word his heart left him no choice. The burning word if not proclaimed will consume you will consume you.

The saddest people I've met over fifty years of ministry are those who knew of a certainty God wanted them to do this or to be on the mission field or ladies. In their case God wanted them to marry that preacher that missionary. And they said no. You can never say no. In that time to God and get away with it you never will have a time of blessing on your life. No, he could no more cease to preach than he could cease to be Jeremiah. If the Old Testament preachers was age of the law was one of condemnation. Ministry of condemnation, 2 Corinthians three if they were compelled to deliver their message how much more is that true of the preacher of the good news of redeeming grace and we must preach what has passed through the crucible of our own experience. Did you notice that none of the enemies of Jeremiah ever accused him of being in the ministry for money for fame? They saw to it that he didn't get any of it welts bruises blows and all the rest.

We happen to preach what is passed through the crucible of our own experience. We shall never produce conviction in others until truth is a burning conviction in our own souls. Said John Bunyan. I preached what I did feel what I startlingly did feel and when David Hume and he never attended Talbot but David Hume the philosopher had listened to John Brown of Harrington listen to it. He said that's the man for me David Hume. That's the man for me. He means what he says he preaches as if Christ were at his elbow because verily he is. Well you say poor fellow. I sure wish I could go there and assuage his grief somewhat. Well did you see did you see verse thirteen sing to the Lord Praise the Lord. [Inaudible] He has delivered the soul of the needy one from the hand of evil doers. Yes the Lord never leaves you and me in doubt as to how this will come out.

His complaint is swallowed up in praise and thanksgiving. My beloved friends. I mean it with all the earnestness of my heart. That's the way it's going to be with all who preach the truth

in the compulsive force of the indwelling Holy Spirit and in the power of the engrafted word of God. Our Father in the quiet of this moment we're living in a tremendous day. If Paul could say certain truths concerning believers unto whom the ends of the ages had come how much more now. Certainly history is coming on to its [inaudible] to its grand finale to the great Hallelujah chorus.

Lord may we rejoice that we are in the grand company of preachers and teachers of the word men and women of God who've gone on. Think of Deborah and [inaudible] the prophetess at a time of deep deep need when even the word of God was lost in the temple and Josiah found this dear woman could give the word from thee Lord bless the seminary this semester. This day this week. This year. Father may we get what no man could ever give us the direct empowered teaching of the Spirit of God. Bless faculty Bless the Dean bless our boards bless our alumni that circle the globe. What a godly company of whom the world is not worthy. Bless them all. Bless the schools of similar position on the word we prayed with Thanksgiving Christ's precious name. Amen.

[End]