

**But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, “You must die!”<sup>9</sup> Why do you prophesy in the LORD’s name that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate and deserted?” And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.**

**<sup>10</sup> When the officials of Judah heard about these things, they went up from the royal palace to the house of the LORD and took their places at the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD’s house. <sup>11</sup> Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and all the people, “This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city. You have heard it with your own ears!”**

**<sup>12</sup> Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard. <sup>13</sup> Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you. <sup>14</sup> As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. <sup>15</sup> Be assured, however, that if you put me to death, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on those who live in it, for in truth the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.” (NIV84)**

Theme: How do you Respond,

1. When someone tells you bad news?
2. When you are asked to share bad news?

How do you respond to bad news? The doctor comes into the room, closes the door, and sits down in the office chair in front of you. “I’m sorry,” he says, “but you have cancer and unless you get some treatment, you are going to die. But the good news is that we caught it early enough that if you get the proper treatment you should be able to recover fully and live a normal life.”

How do you respond to bad news? Do you get angry and upset at your doctor because he warned you that you have cancer? Do you start yelling at him because he delivered you bad news and warned you about what might happen? Of course not; that would be foolish. You

may not like what he told you—no one likes to hear that they are sick, but in the end, you are glad he did tell you so that you could start your treatment.

But that is not how many people react when someone tells them the bad news from God’s Word—the law. Take the people during Jeremiah’s day for example.

But before we get to Jeremiah, we’ve got to talk about Shiloh. For hundreds of years Shiloh was the center of the worship life of the Israelites. During the 400 year period of the judges and more the tabernacle, the elaborate tent in which the Israelites worshiped, was in Shiloh. And inside the tabernacle, inside the most holy place, sat the Ark of the Covenant. On top of the ark were two cherubs or angels made of gold. And there in between the two angels, above the ark was the glory of the Lord—that is where the Lord dwelt. In this way, the Lord was always with his people.

But once, during the time of Samuel—before Israel ever had a king, The Israelites were defeated by their enemies the Philistines in a battle. That night the elders of the Israelites thought it would be a good idea to bring the Ark of the Covenant out with them in battle, which is exactly what they did. They treated this sacred object like a good-luck charm, degrading the very place where the Lord graciously dwelt among his people. As you can imagine this didn’t sit well with the Lord and he allowed the Israelites to be defeated by the Philistines, and the ark was taken. Shiloh was never again the worship center of the Israelites and the glory of Shiloh was taken away from it. Eventually, when David became king, the city of Jerusalem became the center of worship for the Israelites. The temple was built by David’s son Solomon, and the Ark of the Covenant sat in the new Most Holy Place inside the temple and once again the Lord dwelt among his people.

But during the 400 years between David and Jeremiah, many of the Israelites had turned away from the Lord. They began to worship false gods, participating in the despicable act of fornication that accompanied the worship of some of their false gods, and even sacrificing some of their children in fires to these false gods. Many still worshiped the Lord, but that worship often consisted of nothing more than just a bunch of empty rituals.

At the beginning of chapter 26 Jehoiakim became king. So the Lord sent Jeremiah to share with them a message, which he had shared previously when Josiah was king. Even though there is a new regime, his warning still stood—If they did not repent, the city would be destroyed and become desolate, no one would live in Jerusalem. Many people in Jerusalem thought they were invincible, God would never destroy his holy city, the temple is here and so is the Ark of the Covenant. But if they did not repent Jerusalem would be like Shiloh, the ark would be taken away; and the God’s glory would leave her. Jeremiah said, **This is what the LORD says: ‘If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth.’**

The people were upset to say the least. And it was the religious leaders of the people—the priests and the prophets who led the charge against Jeremiah. They rushed at him and took a hold at him. They were going to put him to death because he would dare to say that Jerusalem would be destroyed and become like Shiloh. In the verses after our text, Jeremiah’s life was spared but two godly men who agreed with Jeremiah and even supported him were killed. Obviously, that is a pretty extreme reaction. They were filled with rage simply because of the words of warning that Jeremiah spoke to them. But there are times when we aren’t that far off when it comes to our reaction from God’s Word—especially when someone points out a sin of ours or says that something is contrary to God’s Word despite what we think or what society says is correct. Just think of all the people who get upset nowadays when you say that homosexuality is a sin and that God will condemn those who practice such an unnatural perversion. Other get upset when you say that sex for anyone outside of marriage is sinful. Those that uphold the biblical teachings of the roles of men and women are often attacked and vilified, even from some of their own members. Our sinful nature doesn’t like to be told no. Our sinful nature doesn’t like to be told that what we think is good and right or how we live our lives isn’t in fact good and right, but is a sin against the Lord. There are times when we may be caught up in a sin, and we know that what we are doing is wrong, but when someone comes and points that out to us we get upset and pull out the favorite

line of all sinners, “how dare you judge me!” You see, we know that we are sinners, but we don’t like to be told we are sinners; we don’t want to be reminded of who we are by nature and what we often do. And we get upset at those who won’t scratch our itching ears.

So I go back to my opening question: how do you respond to bad news? Do you get upset at the message or the messenger, or do you realize that while the message was hard to hear, it was an important message to hear, and ultimately you are glad to hear it? You’d be upset at your doctor if he withheld from you the fact that you had cancer—and so the same can be said about a message from the Lord about your sins that lead to eternal damnation.

Just the fact that the Lord comes to us and gives us a warning is an act of love. He doesn’t need to warn us. He didn’t need to warn the people of Jerusalem of the coming destruction they faced. But he warned them anyway. In the same way when we warn someone of their sin it’s not an act of hateful judgment as it is an act of love. When we are warned of sin, then, instead of becoming upset we should be thankful that the Lord has warned us of our sin, we should be grateful that someone cared enough about us to try to turn us from our sinful ways.

Now turn the tables around. Put yourself in Jeremiah’s place. He knew that his message probably wasn’t going to be well taken. Jeremiah’s ministry was a hard one—he had to point out the sins of the people and warn them of destruction time and time again. And often that message wasn’t well received—his life was in danger time and time again.

So how do you respond when you have to point out the sins of others? And that is what we may have to do from time to time and Paul wrote the Galatians, **if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.** We too know that certain portions of God’s Word aren’t going to be received well. We’ve already mentioned some of them, but there are many more. You know how our sinful nature wants to react whenever it is told that it is wrong, sinful, and deserving of death—and you also know that other people may not have the same calm disposition that you have. But what do you do? We hesitate to share God’s Word with someone, especially when it is considered the bad news. We are afraid of getting yelled at, of someone rejecting us,

or it getting thrown back at us since we realize that we are just as sinful as everyone else.

Jeremiah faced those same threats and then some; yet, what did Jeremiah do—or what didn't he do? He didn't turn the other way, he didn't back down. He boldly and confidently went and preached God's Word to the people in the temple, despite having a good idea of how they were going to react.

He reminds us of Jesus in that respect. Jesus was warned that Herod wanted to kill him—he wasn't the only one, the Pharisees, Sadducees and other Jewish leaders wanted him dead too. But Jesus didn't stop preaching and when the time was right he entered Jerusalem, willingly riding into his death so that he could be our Savior.

There is another reason why Jeremiah wasn't hesitant to share God's Word with the people of Jerusalem—it wasn't all bad news. His message contained a warning, but also a promise. **Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.** God promised forgiveness to the people of Jerusalem for those who repent and turn from their evil ways. He would not hold their sins against them, he would not treat them as their sins deserve. The destruction and desolation that he warned them about would not take place—he would save them.

And that is the great thing about sharing God's Word. It's not all bad, it's not all fire and brimstone. There's a lot of good news too. The Lord doesn't want anyone to perish, but all to come to a knowledge of salvation. That is the central message of Scripture—how we are declared not guilty by the Lord on account of Christ. God doesn't want anyone to perish, so he warns us about our sins so that we may repent. He promises not to treat us as our sins deserve or to bring upon the eternal punishment that should be upon us all.

That is because Christ suffered through the eternal punishment for us all. He brought our sins upon himself and paid the eternal price for our sins. The sins of the entire world—everything everyone has ever done wrong was paid for by Christ. So he won't bring about the destruction and disaster upon us that we deserve. He promises to save us from eternal death.

And that message of free forgiveness by the work of Christ, receive through faith in him alone is what we have the privilege to share. And since everyone is a sinner, we get to share that message with all

people. We aren't afraid to point out the sins of others so we can point out their Savior, Jesus Christ.

Like Jeremiah and like Jesus we aren't afraid of how others will react. We aren't afraid to be the doctor who points out the bad news so that he can point to the cure—So we point out sin so we can point out the cure for our sins, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.