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“Stand for What is Right”

Jeremiah 26

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We are living in a time when Christians need to stand for what is right and live for what is true, without the fear of man. In Jeremiah 26, the prophet Jeremiah was threatened with death at the hands of his own countrymen simply because he spoke the truth and stood for what was right. Nevertheless, Jeremiah remained faithful to God and stood his ground without regard to what it might cost him personally. God protected him and his life was spared. But another prophet by the name of Uriah did not fare as well. While Uriah was a good prophet who spoke the truth like Jeremiah, he was fearful and fled to Egypt when people opposed him and threatened his life. In the end, he was killed. There’s a sharp contrast between those who stand for what is right and enjoy God’s protection, and those who run in fear and are cut down. In this teaching Pastor Gary encourages all Christians to stand for what is right.

### Jeremiah Threatened With Death For Sharing God’s Message

1. The chapter opens with a word from the Lord to Jeremiah.
  - a. **Jeremiah 26:2** - *“This is what the LORD says: Stand in the courtyard of the LORD’s house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the LORD. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word.”*
  - b. Pastor Gary said: “God [knew] that Jeremiah might [have been] tempted to do what even today some pastors are tempted to do, [which is yield to] the temptation of avoiding saying the tough stuff because [they] don’t want to offend people. [The temptation would be to] tamp it down, keep the peace [and] don’t saying anything remotely controversial or confrontational, because you don’t want to inspire the ire of people. Now, Jeremiah inspired the ire of people! ... In our flesh we often don’t want confrontation... or [to] get somebody upset, so Jeremiah [knew] a little bit about what this [was] like, because [he was mocked, thrown into a cistern, and beaten]. ... When he

said things that were tough, people got upset, [but] he was faithful, nevertheless, to say what God had put on his heart no matter how unpopular it was. He didn't shy away from saying the hard truth. In fact, he couldn't!"

- i. **Jeremiah 20:9** - *"But if I say, 'I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,' his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.' "*

2. The religious leaders and other "so-called" prophets, who were his own countrymen, sought to have Jeremiah killed because they were tired of hearing Jeremiah's message, which was repent and turn to God before judgment comes!
3. Jeremiah was true to God and he always said what God wanted him to say, because he feared God more than he feared men.
4. Pastor Gary said: "The truth is that Jeremiah wasn't calling for the destruction of Jerusalem, he was [saying that would be the unintended consequence] to those who [rejected] God. ... The real message that Jeremiah was communicating throughout this whole book, [would be] repent [and] relent. ... [If] people would repent [from sin] and turn to God, then God [would] relent [and] not bring upon them the disaster that he otherwise would intend for them. ... This has always been the message of the Bible. This has always been the summary of God's intent for us, that in our sinfulness we are separated from God. In our rebellion there is a gap between us and God that cannot be remedied, except by what Christ has done for us on the cross. And, that if we will turn from our sinful ways and turn to God and trust Christ as our Savior... God [will relent so] we do not experience the ultimate judgment that we otherwise deserve, because God is a merciful God. This was all that Jeremiah was trying to say in his nearly 50 years of ministry. <sup>1</sup> ... This is what he was saying over and over and over again to his own people, the people of Judah: 'If you turn from sin and turn to God you won't have to suffer judgment. [Otherwise] the Babylonians are coming, and they are going to wreck this place!' ... But the truth is often an affront to people, especially if they like their sin. [People] don't want to hear the truth, [and] they don't want to be confronted about their behavior. It's only after [people's] lives are falling apart, because of their sin, that people often then turn to God."
  - a. **Jeremiah 26:3-6** - *"[God said,] Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done. Say to them, '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*

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah was called into ministry at age 17, and he served the Lord into his mid-60s.

*all the nations of the earth.’ ”*

5. **Jeremiah 26:7-11** – *“The priests, the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speak these words in the house of the LORD. But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priest, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, ‘You must die! 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. 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. 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!’ ”*
  - a. Pastor Gary said: “What’s their accusation against him? [It’s that Jeremiah] prophesied against [Jerusalem]. You see, when you can’t refute what the guy is saying [, which came from the Lord], then what you need to do is trump up other charges, and the [charge they came up with was] that he wasn’t patriotic. [They believed he was guilty of] treason against his own country, because [they believed he was] calling for the destruction of the country. He [wasn’t] calling for the destruction of the country, [he was only saying that that would be the consequence] if they [didn’t] turn to God.”
6. Jeremiah wanted to be faithful to tell the truth, and he stood his ground and spoke to the mob with great courage and conviction.
  - a. **Jeremiah 26:12-15** – *“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. 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. As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. 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.’ ”*
7. Pastor Gary said: “When [Jeremiah] trusted the Lord and stood his ground and spoke the truth, God defended him and God protected him and God took care of him. ... The [following verses] tell us that the people came to their senses, and [they] started realizing [that when the prophet Micah said similar things in the days of King Hezekiah, that] nobody killed him. [The people in Micah’s day] actually turned for a season... and God relented, and he didn’t bring disaster upon [them].”
  - i. **Jeremiah 26:16-19** – *“Then the officials and all the people said to the*

*priests and the prophets, 'This man should not be sentenced to death! He has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.' Some of the elders of the land stepped forward and said to the entire assembly of people, 'Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah. He told all the people of Judah, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets." 'Did Hezekiah king of Judah or anyone else in Judah put him to death? Did not Hezekiah fear the LORD and seek his favor? And did not the LORD relent, so that he did not bring the disaster he pronounced against them? We are about to bring a terrible disaster on ourselves!' "*

8. Ahikam stepped forward to support Jeremiah, and he was one of the ways that the Lord protected Jeremiah from harm.
  - a. **Jeremiah 26:24** - *"... Ahikam son of Shaphan supported Jeremiah, and so he was not handed over to the people to be put to death."*
  - b. Pastor Gary said: "[Jeremiah] escaped death, [because] God protected him. [Jeremiah] was willing to stand his ground and not run, and be true to what was right and to honor God. [Whenever] we do [these things] God will take care of us. We have to stand our ground in these days for what is right. We can't [run] from the truth. We have to be the light that shines in a dark world."

#### The Prophet Uriah

9. **Jeremiah 26:20-23** - *"(Now Uriah son of Shemaiah from Kiriath Jearim was another man who prophesied in the name of the LORD; he prophesied the same things against this city and this land as Jeremiah did. When King Jehoiakim and all his officers and officials heard his words, the king sought to put him to death. But Uriah heard of it and fled in fear to Egypt. King Jehoiakim, however, sent Elnathan son of Acbor to Egypt, along with some other men. They brought Uriah out of Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim, who had him struck down with a sword and his body thrown into the burial place of the common people.)"*
  - a. Jeremiah wasn't the only prophet in his day; there were other prophets like Uriah, but they aren't as well-known as other "major" prophets.
  - b. Pastor Gary said: "[Uriah's story is a sharp contrast to Jeremiah's story], and [his story] is a strong warning to us. ... Both men [were] called by God. Both [said] the same things from God. Both [were] true to God, [and] said the tough stuff [that God directed them to say]. But when confronted... and threatened, one [ran and one stood his ground]. [The] guy that [ran was] tracked down and his head [was] cut off. [The] guy that [stood] his ground [was] saved. ... Now listen, I understand it doesn't always work out that way.

I get that plenty of people in the world have stood their ground for what is right, and they were still slaughtered. But, if there's one thing that stands out to me as to why God [inserted] this little parenthetical commentary about an unknown prophet – right in the middle of this life-threatening situation for Jeremiah – it's this: When you know what is right and you have convictions about things that honor God, and when truth burns in your heart like fire, no matter what others may do or [what] others may say or think, no matter where culture drifts, no matter how unpopular it is or how crazy people think you've become or how threatening the opposition gets, stand your ground and don't run, honor God, speak the truth and stand for what is right! ... [Let] God defend you!"

### Stand For Truth

10. Pastor Gary said: "Friends, it's not enough to know the truth or even tell the truth if you don't stand for truth. What are the things that are important to you? Important enough to you in your life, your family, your community, [and] your nation, that you are willing to stand for to honor God? Christians have got to get serious about standing for what is right – not running – [mobilizing] together for what is right in our nation."
11. Pastor Gary commented on recent statements made by Virginia Governor Ralph Northam in an interview on WTOP radio (concerning HB2491, which thankfully did not make it out of the subcommittee <sup>2</sup>) for what amounts to the governor's support for infanticide. <sup>3</sup>
  - a. Delegate Kathy Tran <sup>4</sup> was the chief patron of this bill.
  - b. Governor Northam said: "If a mother is in labor, I can tell you exactly what would happen. The infant would be delivered. The infant would be kept comfortable. The infant would be resuscitated if that's what the mother and the family desired, and then a discussion would ensue between the physicians and the mother."
  - c. Pastor Gary said: "This is post-delivery! This is infanticide! This is insanity! Friends, we have to wake up! If the church doesn't wake up how will the light be shined in a dark world? Don't think the governor didn't know what he was saying; he's a pediatric neurosurgeon! He [knew] exactly what he was saying! [He was] talking about the idea that a decision could be made regarding a baby post-delivery! ... If someone said, '[Our dog had a litter of puppies] and we don't want all of [them], so we're going to take a couple of [them] and put them in a burlap bag, [add] some rocks, and throw them into the river.'

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<sup>2</sup> <http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?191+ful+HB2491>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6WD\\_3H0wKU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6WD_3H0wKU) – (the video concerning the questions and remarks made by Governor Northam are found between 38:45 to 41:05 in the video)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/KathyForDelegate/>

People's heads would explode! But now, [people] are having conversations about whether or not babies can be delivered, and then there can be a discussion [about] whether the babies can live or not. We better wake up and we better say the hard stuff and stand for what is right in our country and not care what other people think.”

12. Pastor Gary said: “Two weeks ago... I took Sanctity of Human Life Sunday to present what I hoped was a balanced, truthful, grace-filled teaching on how sacred life is to God, and how there is forgiveness for women who have had abortions and men who have a part to it. ... [I] get downright angry when politicians try to advance legislation for the killing of babies. ... We had better mobilize as Christians and take a stand for what is right and vote them out. We've got to take a stand in our day. ... If you live in Ashburn, your delegate David Reid <sup>5</sup> was a co-sponsor of [HB2491]. And if you live in Leesburg like I do, Delegate Wendy Gooditis <sup>6</sup> was also a co-patron of [HB2491]. I'm calling them out, because they are accountable to us. Don't think it's over, because even though it failed in the subcommittee, they've vowed to bring it back next year. So [when] you come to November 2019, you remember Reid and Gooditis [when it's time to vote]. ... This is insanity. The New York legislature just passed similar measures... Governor Cuomo signed it into law, and you Google it, you can go and see [that] the New York state legislature cheered and applauded loudly in the chambers when that bill was passed. This is the kind of insanity that our country has reached at this point [in time]. Christians had better be more like Jeremiah than Uriah. We need more Jeremiah's in our day, who are going to stand up and say, 'I'm going to trust God.' ... God will take care of you. God will be honored. As long as we honor God, that's all we have to care about. ... And by the way, it's not only standing about political issues. It's about standing for what's right in your [life, your home, workplace, your marriage, etc.]”
13. The Jews had to rebuild when they returned from 70 years of captivity, and as they started the project, under the leadership of Nehemiah, they encountered opposition, and what we might call psychological warfare, from neighboring nations that didn't share their common values and didn't worship God.
  - a. The people became weary and discouraged from the constant barrage of negativity and the threats of war.
  - b. Pastor Gary said: “It's easy to become battle weary... and I think increasingly [more so for Christians today]. Fight battle fatigue. [We] are in a war, and wherever there is good and wherever there is good because there is God, there's always going to be opposition to good and to God. Nehemiah, seeing that his people were growing weary from all of [the] constant barrage of [verbal] attacks and the threat of warfare as the people were trying to rebuild

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.delegatedavidreid.com>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wendygooditis.com>

their city and rebuild their lives and just honor God and live for the glory of God, Nehemiah would say to them: *'After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." '7 ...* There will always be opposition to what is good and right and holy, because there will always be opposition to God. Even in our own lives we might be tempted to run because we are battle weary and we are discouraged, but in a day that is getting darker, God is looking for more Jeremiahs not Uriahs; people who will stand for what is right and trust God to defend them.

- c. **Ephesians 6:13** - *"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."*

### Discussion Questions

1. Read **Jeremiah 26:1-11** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks concerning the temptation to hold back from the telling the truth. (See #1 above)
3. How have you, like Jeremiah, suffered the consequences from telling the truth from a biblical worldview?
4. Share examples of times when you've had to deal with issues raised by other Christians which weren't supported by Scripture. (See #2 and #3 above)
5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comments regarding the consistent message from God as found in the Bible: repent and relent. (See #4 above)
6. How would you feel if you were in Jeremiah's place, concerning the threat of death for speaking the truth? (See #5 above)
7. Allow the people in your group to share examples of times when they've shared the truth with courage and conviction like Jeremiah. (See #6 above)
8. How has the Lord protected you when you stood your ground? (See #7 above)
9. Share examples about times when a Christian friend/relative supported you like Ahikam supported Jeremiah. (See #8 above)

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<sup>7</sup> Nehemiah 4:14

10. Spend time reading and talking about the prophet Uriah and the contrast between Uriah fleeing difficult circumstances and Jeremiah being firmly resolved to stand his ground. (See #9 above)
11. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments concerning Governor Northam's statements about infanticide and HB2491, which was supported by three politicians in Northern Virginia. (See #10 and #11 and #12 above) - You may want to show the video clip from the interview the governor did on WTOP (see footnote #3)
12. Allow the people in your group to share examples of the ways they stand up for life in a culture that seems to be determined to end life at all stages (abortion, assisted suicide, etc.). (See #12 above)
13. What are some of the experiences you've had in which you had to deal with "battle fatigue" and "psychological warfare"? (See #13 above)
14. Read and discuss [Ephesians 6:13](#).
15. Close your time in prayer and allow the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)