

Explore the Bible: God Speaks

July 24, 2023

The Explore the Bible lesson for August 6 focuses on Jeremiah 36:19-31.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Bible lessons like this one have been an important part of the Baptist Standard for many years. Each has a cost of at least **\$50** to produce. To ensure these lessons continue to be provided the rest of 2023 and into 2024, you can **make a donation** in any amount by visiting [our donation page](#). In the comments field, note your donation is toward the cost of Bible studies.*

I doubt it was my mom's favorite sentence, but it was certainly one that you she used most often: "How many times do I have to tell you?" Though I did not think so at the time, in hindsight I now understand that it was a fair question. She would give clear instructions about some assignment I needed to complete, some chore that I needed to do or some promise that I needed to fulfill, and I would fail to do it.

I would like to blame it on my ADHD. Although such diagnoses were not made back then, I learned after my own child was diagnosed with it, that I had grown up with it too. Still, I could remember obscure historical facts and obscure biblical trivia that amazed most of the adults I interacted with, so why could I not remember her simple instructions? The honest answer is, I did not want to.

Today's passage reflects upon God's repeated attempts to get through to Judah his will and desires for their activity. The content of the message was not new to their relationship, much of it can be found in previous prophets like Isaiah and Micah. And yet, like my mother, God committed to expressing it repeatedly. And like, me, Judah refused to listen.

Delivered (Jeremiah 36:19-21)

Ten chapters before our passage, we read of king Jehoiakim going to great lengths to pursue, capture and kill a prophet named Uriah because he did not like the message the prophet had delivered. Now we learn that the king would be looking to capture Jeremiah and his amanuensis Baruch once God's message was delivered to him. Earlier in chapter 36, Baruch had read the scroll to the elders. Knowing its content, the elders sought to protect the prophet and his aid.

Steps were taken to protect the scroll as much as possible, while the elders then went and verbally communicated its content. The king then had the elders retrieve the scroll and read it directly to him so that there would be no mistaking what its content was.

Though the outlining of this sequencing of events builds the tension of the story and highlights how precarious a situation it was to present anything to the king, there is a truth revealed in the repetition that is important to remember. Through all the nervousness and struggles of man, God got his word delivered aloud to several key people three times and to the king twice.

What fears do we have that sometimes get in the way of us delivering God's word to people around us? How does hearing of God using man's fear to actually get the message out there more, affect your appraisal of your fears?

Destroyed (Jeremiah 36:22-26)

The middle section of our text relates the king's attempts to silence the message. Using an instrument normally used to create scrolls, the king sliced up the text as it was read to him. His actions reveal the rebellion he

was participating in was not from a lack of understanding or out of ignorance but was a deliberate refusal to listen to the words of God delivered by his prophet.

Thinking he could do to the messenger, what he did to the message, the king sent people to collect Jeremiah and Baruch so that he might kill them. His lack of the fear of God is contrasted with the disposition of his officials who saw the importance of the message. His failure in finding his two targets is contrasted with his apparent success in destroying their message. The emphasis of God having hid Jeremiah and Baruch serves as a foreshadowing of how God would preserve his word too.

Does it make a difference if sin is grounded in ignorance versus open treason against God? Why or why not? What do we make of the fact that God allowed Uriah to die, but here protects Jeremiah from harm?

Replaced (Jeremiah 36:27-31)

God gives Jeremiah instructions to recreate the message he had originally written and to add content outline Jehoiakim's destruction. The judgment expressed here went beyond simply communicating Jehoiakim's death. It stated that the line of David would not continue through his descendants. He would suffer burning like the scroll he had torched, and his line would never sit on the throne.

Not coincidentally or accidentally, this is one of the places where the genealogies of Jesus diverge between Luke and Matthew. Though there is not space here to cover all the intricacies of exactly what happened during the exile and the role of Shealtiel, perhaps even involving two separate Shealtiels, the biblical writers are careful to communicate that while Jesus' legal lineage through Joseph came through Jehoiakim's line (Matthew), his actual lineage through Mary (Luke) circumvented that line in this place and others. Interestingly, Matthew omits the mention of Jehoiakim from his

lineage as well, even as he lists his children.

What does Jeremiah's recreation of the text tell us about how inspiration may work in this instance? How do the messages delivered by preachers today differ from the message of the prophets? How do those differences impact how we handle disagreement with a pastor's message as opposed to how God handled disagreement with Jeremiah's words?

Timothy Pierce, Ph.D., is associate professor of Christian Studies at East Texas Baptist University.