

~ Silenced Saints ~

Text: Jeremiah 11:17-23 | Isaiah 30:9-10

Theme: God's servants must faithfully proclaim and apply His Word, regardless of opposition or pressure to compromise.

Introduction:

1. Who was Jeremiah?
 - a. The prophet Jeremiah was divinely commissioned of the Lord to preach to the southern kingdom of Israel, after the northern kingdom had been taken captive by Assyria. His ministry would likely have spanned about 40yrs, up until the southern kingdom of Judah was also conquered.
 - b. He was the son of a priest from the town Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. The main thrust of His message was to rebuke Judah for forsaking God. Jeremiah used God's judgement of the northern kingdom as a witness against Judah, but they would not listen.
 - **Jeremiah 3:8** *"And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also."*
2. Today we are going to look at two examples from scripture of objections to the faithful preaching of the Word of God.

Main:

- I. The Threatening Enforcing Silence (Jer 11:21)
 - A. Opposition to preaching of the gospel
 1. Jeremiah was commanded by God to preach God's message to Israel.
 - a. He was a chosen prophet of God.
 - i. **Jeremiah 1:5** *"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."*
 - b. He had a God ordained message
 - i. **Jeremiah 1:7** *"But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."*
 2. We have been commanded by God to preach the gospel.
 - a. We are a people, chosen by God
 - i. **1 Peter 2:9** *"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"*
 - b. We have a God ordained message
 - i. **Mathew 28:19-20** *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son,*

and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

B. Opposition to preaching of the gospel

1. The people in Jeremiah’s day were facing a coming judgement if they didn’t repent.
 - a. God promised Israel, even before that entered the promised land, that he would use the nations around them to punish them if they turned away from him.
 - Deut 28:47-49 “Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God... therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee... The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from afar...”
 - i. The due to their rebellion against Him, God had already allowed the northern kingdom of Israel to be taken captive by the Assyrian Empire.
 - ii. Jeremiah used the judgement God had brought on the northern kingdom to preach a message of warning to Judah. Judgement was coming and they needed to repent before it arrived.
 - b. The response of the people Jeremiah was ministering to was to threaten Jeremiah with death if he didn’t cease from preaching the word of God.
 - i. The people didn’t want to be warned of coming judgement, they didn’t want to be challenged about their rebellion against God, and so they threatened the preacher rather than changing their ways.
2. Sinners today are just as resistant to God’s Word as the people of Jeremiah’s day.
 - a. We have been commissioned by God to preach a warning of coming judgement and a message of salvation for those who will believe.
 - **Colossians 1:27** “*To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*”
 - **Acts 17:30** “*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*”
 - b. The response of the lost to the gospel message today has largely been to make attempts to shut down anyone who preaches the gospel.
 - i. I don’t think, not even for one minute, that the devil was absent from the decision to shut down church’s during

- Covid while keeping the bottle shops open so people could get themselves drunk.
- ii. Apparently, the government believes that churches are unessential, but your beer isn't. They shut down the preaching of the gospel which has the power to change lives for the better, while they continue to profit from the sale of alcohol which has the power to remove natural inhibitions against harming others and leads to domestic violence, inappropriate behaviour in public, and vehicular accidents from people driving while under the influence.
 - iii. If you've ever been out witnessing on the street or from house to house, you will very quickly find that some people become aggressive when they are presented with the gospel. They want to shut you down because they don't want to be told they are a sinner in need of salvation.
 - c. As Christians, we have a responsibility to continue to preach the gospel, despite the opposition or persecution, which may come.
 - i. **John 15:20** *"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."*

II. The Compromise Effecting Silence (Isaiah 30:9-10)

A. Attempting to soften the preaching

1. The prophet Isaiah began ministering in the southern kingdom of Judah close to a century before Jeremiah.
 - a. The ministry of Isaiah was during the period when Assyria was the dominant power in the region, having taken the northern kingdom of Israel captive.
 - i. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah preached against Israel's idolatry, vain religion, pride, and self-sufficient attitude in rejecting God.
 - b. Isaiah's ministry spanned the reign of 4 kings:
 - i. Uzziah, the king whose death occurred in the same year that Isaiah's ministry began and who was a generally godly king.
 - ii. Jotham, who continued the godly reforms of king Uzziah.
 - iii. Ahaz, an absolutely wicked king whose wife Jezebel is remembered today for her paganism and wickedness.
 - iv. Hezekiah, a very godly king who trusted Isaiah and led the nation back toward God.
 - c. Of the four kings under Jeremiah's ministry, only one was godly.

- i. Josiah led the last great revival in Judah before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took the people captive, including the prophet, Daniel.
 - ii. Jehoiakim rejected God's word and persecuted Jeremiah.
 - iii. Jehoiachin reigned three months before being taken captive to Babylon.
 - iv. Zedekiah was a weak and disobedient king who ignored Jeremiah's godly counsel.
2. It is no wonder then, that the people didn't want to hear hard preaching from the prophet of God.
 - a. They said to the seers, "see not," and to the prophets, "prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits."
 - i. In saying "see not" they were effectively saying, "don't seek counsel from God. Don't seek to know the word, will, and way of God."
 - ii. In saying "prophecy not unto us right things" they were saying, "we would rather you tell us lies than tell us the truth about what God is actually saying."
 - b. This is a step back from saying don't speak or we will kill you, but it was intended to accomplish the same end.
 - i. The people wanted the prophet of God to compromise his message to keep them comfortable. They would rather hear lies than hear the true Word of God.
 - ii. The phrase "smooth things" carries the meaning of flatteries and easy things. In other words, they wanted to the prophet of God to tell them how good they were rather than tell them they were sinning against God.
 - iii. They wanted Isaiah to prophesy deceits. This phrase effectively means, "to give a vision of delusion." They wanted Isaiah to confirm them in their own delusion that they were doing fine and that God wasn't going to bring judgement upon them.
 - c. The world today doesn't want to hear the gospel preached right, and unfortunately, many churches have complied.
 - i. The lost only want to hear smooth things and so instead of telling them that they are sinners who need to repent and ask God to save them, the churches of today will tell the lost that they really are good people who just "need a relationship with Jesus", you just "need to follow Jesus."
 - ii. The world today finds the gospel message offensive and so churches compromise and start taking the blood atonement out of the gospel message because, "someone might find blood a bit too offensive." They take repentance out of the gospel message because people today don't want to feel too bad about themselves and

the call to repentance from sin indicates that they are a wicked sinner.

- iii. Jesus said in Luke 5:32, *"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* But the church today has gone about to change the gospel message.
- iv. I titled this section of our study *The Compromise Effecting Silence* because when we compromise on the message, we have allowed the truth to be silenced.

III. The People Demanding Silence (Jer 11: 17-23 | Isaiah 30:9-10)

A. The people of God sought silence

1. We've been focusing our study outward on the lost world around us, but now it's time to look within the walls of the church and do some heart searching.
 - a. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah were not sent to the heathen nations but to Israel, God's chosen nation.
 - i. It was the people of God who were attempting to silence the prophets of God and keep them from faithfully proclaiming the Word of God.
 - ii. The people of God had reached a point where they were so averse to hearing the Word of God that they openly called for the preacher to change his message or else don't speak at all.
 - b. When preaching touches favourite sins, people often attack the preacher instead of examining themselves.
 - i. The natural response of our proud human hearts is to seek a way to take the guilt and blame away from ourselves.
 - Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, and the serpent was already confirmed in his rebellion and so made no efforts to shift the blame.
 - ii. If blame shifting doesn't work, we may resort to misdirection. This has also been called "whataboutism" which is when the person under conviction says, "well what about that person and what they said (or did)?"
 - iii. The other common response is to simply attack the messenger with things like:
 - "What about this area of failure in your own life?"
 - "You should have approached this in a more humble or Christian manner."
 - "I feel like you have the wrong motives in this."
 - "Who made you the authority over me?"
 - iv. Rather than admit we got it wrong, we tend to try and silence the one who is pointing out the problem.
2. We need to have the right response to correction.

- a. The book of Proverbs contains some excellent instruction on how to be a wise individual.
 - i. In Proverbs chapter 1 we find this instruction, *“A wise man will hear, and will increase in learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: ... The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*
 - ii. It is sad that we are so often weak in our rebuke of sin and slack in our efforts to reprove error because we are lacking in this area of “the fear of the LORD.”
 - If we had a right view on the holiness of God, we would err on the side of caution rather than on the side of liberty.
 - I’m not saying we ought to become legalists, and your personal convictions should not be foisted upon the personal lives of others, but we ought to be more sensitive to grieving of the Holy Spirit than to potentially offending sinners, whether saved or not.
- B. Would the people of God please stand up
 1. We ought to be setting the example for holy living, not seeking to undermine it.
 - a. We live in a day and age in which the devil has been very effective in establishing a world system that is totally opposed to the scriptures.
 - i. The Bible says we are to be conformed to the image of Christ, but the world system says we must conform to its standards or else be maligned and called hateful evildoers.
 - ii. The worlds system says that you must support the breakdown of homes through no-fault divorce and through the proliferation of needless abortions. But the Bible says that every life holds intrinsic value with God and that the family unit was designed by God and is for our best good.
 - iii. The worlds system says that you are hateful if you oppose the transgender movement and its ideology, but the Bible still calls that behaviour sodomy, and an abomination.
 - b. We need Christians who are willing rather to take a stand for the Philippians 4:8 lifestyle.
 - i. *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phil 4:8)*

- ii. We should be exemplars of this godly standard, not opposers of it.
- 2. It isn't easy to take a godly stand today, but it is imperative that we do, if we would set a good foundation for the next generation.
 - a. People are more than happy for you to take a stand for the Word of God so long as your stand doesn't cut across a particular sin or idol in their own life.
 - i. Be ready to take a stand even when it is unpopular to do so. There are things this church stands for that many would call legalistic or even extreme, but we seek only to be faithful to what we believe is a faithful application of the scriptures and leave the rest to God.
 - ii. Some things that are unpopular today are:
 - KJV only church services. This church is unapologetically KJV only and we will not support another Bible version being used in our services.
 - Simple Hymnology without the rock beat and worldly vocal styles. This church does not endorse the use of either secular music or so called Contemporary Christian Music. That should be a standard you maintain in your home as well. If you wouldn't use that music to worship God in the church, why would you use it to feed your appetites at home?
 - Godly standards of appearance including your behaviour and your attire. This church holds that God intended there to be a distinction between the way men and women both conduct themselves and the way they adorn themselves. In a world where the distinctives are being broken down it is important that we uphold them.
 - iii. **Proverbs 22:28** *"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."*
 - b. If God's people don't set the example, who will?
 - i. This is where we come back to the challenge, will the people of God please stand up.
 - Stand up for the gospel.
 - Stand up for the truth.
 - Stand up for godliness.
 - Stand up for personal holiness and practice it in your own life.

Conclusion:

1. Will you exemplify Philippians 4:8 Christianity, despite the opposition and even persecution? Or will you allow the truth to be silenced through compromise or opposition?
2. Don't become one of those who opposes the preaching of God's Word.