

God's Prophet Threatened

Key Verse:
*"Therefore now
amend your ways
and your doings,
and obey the voice
of the Lord your
God; and the Lord
will repent him of
the evil that he
hath pronounced
against you."
—Jeremiah 26:13*

Selected Scriptures:
*Jeremiah 1:6-10;
26:8-15*

The phrase "speaking truth to power" was highlighted in the Civil Rights and anti-war movements of the mid-20th century. However, the concept it embraces, which encourages individuals to speak out against authority even when it might be difficult or risky, has been around for thousands of years. The concept is even found in the Bible, perhaps nowhere more forcefully than Jesus' response to Pontius Pilate, who had authority to condemn him to death. Responding to Pilate's query to Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."—John 18:33,36,37

Today's lesson features another example of "speaking truth to power" found in the life of the Prophet Jeremiah. Called to be a prophet at a young age, Jehovah assured

Jeremiah that he would indeed prophesy to the people of Judah despite being called a youth. The Lord said, "Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. ... Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."—Jer. 1:7,9,10, *American Standard Version*

Throughout the Bible we find a pattern of Israel rejecting and, in some cases, killing the prophets sent by Jehovah. Messages calling for repentance, warning of divine judgment, exposure of hypocrisy and false righteousness and contradictions of popular beliefs and actions were sufficient provocation for the people to threaten Jehovah's handpicked messengers.

When Jeremiah prophesied against the city of Jerusalem and Israel's Temple, "then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears." Jeremiah responded, "Do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city. ... Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death."—Jer. 26:11,14,15,24

May the example of Jeremiah's mission of "speaking truth to power" be an encouragement for each of us to confidently preach the Gospel when it may not seem popular. Our message has been personally delivered by Jesus: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."—Matt. 28:19,20, *Revised Standard Version* ■