

What Happens When You Don't Omit a Single Word

⁸ 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! ⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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!"

¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. ¹⁵ 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."

Do you like it when telemarketers call? The fact they keep calling tells us it is working. Enough people must buy from them or else they would give it up. I heard that a good telemarketer makes 100 calls per hour. And in a ten hour shift they will make one or two sales. Think about it. A hundred calls an hour, a ten hour shift, and one or two sales. That is a success rate of less than 1%.

There are some jobs out there where you fail more than you succeed. Telemarketers are one. Another is the role of a prophet. We have an example of one in our Old Testament reading. Jeremiah was one of the prophets Jesus described in our gospel reading when he lamented how Jerusalem killed and rejected so many prophets. Did they have such a low success rate? I suggest not. If God did not send them out, their success rate and ours will be 0%. Let's thank God for sending us the prophets and that they did not omit anything God wanted to share with us. Yes, it meant much rejection, but it also means many will believe and are saved.

I. There is resistance and rejection.

"Kill him." Thankfully I have never heard that after a sermon. I had people nod off a bit. I had others checking their watches. There is the old joke. A boy comes to shake the pastor's hand after church and hands him a quarter. "I will put that in the mission plate for you," the pastor tells the boy. "No, it is for you," the boy says back. "That is nice of you, but why?" asks the pastor. "My dad says you are the poorest preacher he knows." I am sure I have my critics, but no one ever said, "Kill him."

Jeremiah did. Jeremiah had a tough ministry. It was so tough that we nickname him, "The Weeping Prophet." A new king is on the throne. God told Jeremiah to pull one of his sermons out of the file and to preach it again. But first he told him not to omit a single word. Why? Perhaps Jeremiah remembered how Uriah was executed for preaching the same things he did. Maybe Jeremiah was tempted to tone it down. But God told him, "Don't omit a word." He didn't. What happens when you don't omit a single word?

⁸ 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! ⁹ 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. Jeremiah's message was the same as before. You have ignored God. You stopped listening to his Word. You worship false Gods. Now God is going to tear you down. Jerusalem and its temple will one day be rubble. That is why they got mad. And not just the masses. **¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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!"** Now the priests and leaders joined the frenzy.

Many years later, the you can hear another angry crowd whipped up in a frenzy. And it was very close to the very same place. "Crucify him. Crucify him," they demanded. They, too, didn't like his message. They, too, were agitated by unfaithful priests. The difference here is they did not demand the death of one of God's prophets. They demanded the death of God himself, the Christ, Jesus.

Why so much animosity? Paul gives us some insight into this in our reading earlier. **Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.** Preach God's Word to a hundred people, all with similar backgrounds, and you will notice that some believe and others will not. That is because faith is a miracle. No one can say Jesus is Lord without the Holy Spirit. Does this mean he

doesn't work on the hearts of unbelievers? He does, but they refuse to believe. They already have their gods. They are slaves to their own desires. They are interested in earthly things. Faith is not the normal reaction to God. Rejection is the norm. Faith is the miraculous exception.

What if I started the sermon like this, "You don't listen to God's Word and it shows. Your god is your stomach. Your mind is on earthly things. God is going to tear you down." How would you feel? I would be hurt. But here is the crucial moment. It is true. We don't listen to God, at least not very well. We are focused on earthly things. This should drive us into shame. "It is true. I am a sinner."

Or we could go the other way. We are naturally defensive even when faced with the truth, especially the truth of our sin. We deny it. We get angry. "You must die," they said to Jeremiah. "Crucify him," they said to Jesus. If only Jeremiah toned it down. If only Jesus performed miracles and said nothing about the Kingdom of God. But they didn't omit a word and we see what happens when you do that.

II. There is a message of hope and forgiveness.

Jeremiah and Jesus didn't omit a word about man's sin, but they also didn't omit a word about God's grace. ¹² **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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. ¹⁵ 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."**

Jeremiah first showed them that they were angry at the wrong person. God made him a prophet. He has been doing it for 23 years. They can go and check. Everything he said came straight from God, every word. So their beef was with God, not him. If they decided to kill him, so be it. He knew he would die an innocent man.

He then told them to listen to everything he said. ¹³ **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.** He exposed sin. He also spoke of God's grace. "Turn," Jeremiah said, "Reform." And notice that it doesn't say that God may change his mind. It says God will change his mind. He will relent.

Go back to our gospel and see how Jesus feels about Jerusalem. He knew most will reject him. He knew they will crucify him. But Jesus wanted to gather them up, every single, hateful person. And here is the clincher. He went into that Jerusalem. They seized him, tried him, beat him, and crucified him. Paul explained what that means to us in our reading earlier: **But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by that power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will become like his glorious body. ... stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!**

We know the how. Jesus's exchanged his innocent life for our guilt so that his wounds and death pays for our sins. That makes it possible for God to relent and forgive us. But this tells us what happens to us. We are not focused on earthly things. Our citizenship is in heaven. Our god isn't our stomach; our God is the Lord. We are not enemies of the cross; we embrace it. We don't glory in our sins; we glory in God. And we can't wait for him to come back because he will transform our lowly, sinful bodies to be like his.

But notice his last command. Stand firm. Your Baptism washes away all your sins. You don't need to be baptized again. Jesus died for our sins once and for all. They are already paid for. But our bodies are lowly now. They still are naturally sinful and still want to resist God. So stand firm in Christ. This happens when we realize we still need reforming, not just once at Baptism, but every day. We stand firm when we listen to God's Word, all of it, where warns us when we are straying slowly back to the old ways. So he reforms us daily so we stand firm in Christ.

Telemarketers certainly meet a lot of rejection. But it is successful enough that they keep trying. We have seen what happens when you don't omit a single word from God's Word. Many resent it and may become angry. But if we don't preach it all, the success rate would be zero. Thank God he sent prophets like Jeremiah. Thank God he sent Jesus who, too, was rejected, but fulfilled all of God's promises by dying for us. It is tempting to skip some or all of God's Word. Don't. We have something far better than you can get from a telemarketer. We have God's Word which tell us how to be saved. Don't omit a single word. Amen.