

Christ Calls His Servants 3) They Endure Enmity

Jeremiah 20:7-13 • June 21, 2026 • Series: Christ Calls His Servants to be Faithful



[Transcribed from Sunday's audio, [listen here](#)] I don't often talk about video games, but when I was younger, I was of that generation that first found millions of people interested in playing them. Funny thing about some of those games is, it seems like everything is trying to kill you. You're this plumber guy jumping around, and every plant is trying to devour you. Every mushroom is somehow poisonous and deadly. And if that wasn't bad enough, the screen keeps on moving! You can't go backwards. And then there's a time limit. If you don't get to the end by the end of the time limit, you're going to die. It seems like that jumping plumber guy has no friends, no creatures on his side, except for the ones he's trying to save. And everything is working against you.

Maybe the Christian life can begin to feel like that for God's people. Today we're looking at how we endure enmity. At time's it's like the whole world, like Jeremiah said, "everyone around me", even those that are supposed to be close friends, are against me. So, we'll continue our series today looking at what it is to be a faithful servant called by Christ. A faithful servant endures enmity. We'll consider that as we look at Jeremiah 20.

We see Jeremiah, the prophet, describing his call. Our translation here says, "You deceived me." But if you look at the footnote there, it also could be translated (as I spoke earlier), "you persuaded me, Lord, and I was persuaded" or "convinced". That is, God called Jeremiah to a task he probably never would have wanted to sign up for. Jeremiah was a young man, and he was called to speak to a people that were obstinate and already set against the Lord.

So Jeremiah began to begin his game. And even at level one, he found from day one, everybody was fighting to snuff him out. He says, "I am ridiculed all day long. Everyone mocks me." So, Jeremiah found a conundrum. As he was serving the Lord, one who carried the authority of the I Am, the God who commissioned him, he might have hoped that people would look up to him or maybe at least respect him to some degree. But it says he was ridiculed all day long and mocked by everyone.

And then Jeremiah speaks of his mission. He says, "Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction." (*Hamas vaSod*, חַמַּס וְשׂוּד violence and destruction.) Jeremiah's call was to actually warn the people and say, "Violence is coming. Destruction is on its way." And people didn't want to hear that. Much like what the Apostle Paul said with people looking for teachers to say what they want to hear, itching their ears. Back in Jeremiah's time, people wanted to hear nothing will happen. "We can go on in our sin. We don't need to turn to the Lord in repentance. We can just continue as is and there will never be a game over because God loves us. So, we should only have prophets saying, 'God loves you and everything will always be fine and there will never be any judgment.'"

But Jeremiah was called to speak both law and gospel, both sin and grace. And when he called out "violence and destruction," he was God's messenger telling the people it was enough. For those who didn't repent, their sin would come on their own heads. And Jeremiah called out "violence and destruction" to warn the people so that they might turn from their sin. And yet, he says, "The word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long." There's his conundrum. If he speaks God's word and he warns of violence, he becomes the target of violence.

So, what's the conclusion he reaches? He contemplates the thought, "I will not mention his word or speak any more in his name." Can you picture Jeremiah contemplating that and him thinking, "What if I just stepped aside from this message of violence, this message of warning against the people?"

Isn't that tempting to do when you have to warn a world that it's in the danger of God's judgment? Isn't it tempting to maybe just not say it? There will be reproach, there will be rebuke, and there will be mockery when you do it. So, like Jeremiah, we might begin to contemplate, "Maybe I'll just not mention his word or even speak his name anymore."

Wouldn't that make things more comfortable? Doesn't it make things more comfortable? I know how it is. There are opportunities to let people hear of the coming violence and destruction, the wrath of God over sin. And yet it's just easier to not mention the Lord unless it's brought up by either friends or family or those close to us. That's because those close to us can be what Jesus said. The members of your own household might even turn against you. Or those that you love might hate you or hand you over for persecution.

How did Jeremiah conclude this? Well, he found yet another conundrum. Not only did he have violence and destruction to proclaim and people pouring down violence on him, Jeremiah had something within him. When I was playing video games and that plumber guy always had everything against him, eventually they figured out that it's kind of fun to have someone on your side. So, they created a (dinosaur) character a few years later that that plumber could ride and that character could eat the other enemies, which was pretty fun. You go around and find all the turtles and the mushrooms that were trying to kill you and just eat them. And it would just swallow them. Problem solved. Sometimes that character, which was called Yoshi, would eat a fire mushroom. Then in the games you could see just his stomach began to burn. His lips and mouth began to puff and he turned red. And eventually if you waited long enough, he would just have to spit it out. And the fire came out. He couldn't hold it in.

That's Jeremiah. He has taken in the scroll of the Word of God, and he has it within him. Having devoured the Word of God, he can't hold it in very long. He says, "His word is like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I'm weary of holding it in. Indeed, I cannot." Jeremiah's other conundrum: He doesn't just say, "I shouldn't stop speaking it." He says, "I can't stop speaking it."

Imagine, brothers and sisters, if our faith was so filled with the Word of God, if we had the fire of the spirit in our heart so much and we drank it up every day that we were vomiting it every day, so to speak. The world would be almost repulsed as it says, "violence and destruction? What are you talking about?" We would say, "I can't help it. I just have to speak this." If only of God's people were faithful servants like Jeremiah! If I could take in his word and not just hold it in for myself, but like Jeremiah, begin to say, "I can't hold it in!"

When we hold in the word of God, when we no longer want to speak it, we fall into a dangerous trap because soon it begins to devour from within. Later on, God speaks of what happens to those who quench his word. In chapter 21, he says to those who reject his word, "I will punish your deeds as you deserve," declares the Lord. "I will kindle a fire in your forest and will consume everything around you." God warns the people his wrath is coming. And it will come with the fires of judgment.

To hold back and to not speak of this is to ignore our plight. Soon the time will end. We don't have a little clock on the top of the screen telling us how much time is left, but we do know if we are not secure, if we are not right with our God. Eventually time will end. Either we will die or the Lord will come and announce now is the day of judgment.

This isn't hard for us to speak. But it is often hard for others to hear. And that can at times make it hard for us to speak because we face the fire of persecution. Jeremiah recognizes it will bring the worst persecution. He says, "I hear many whispering, 'Terror on every side. Let's denounce him!' All my close ones. (Literally here it says, "all the men of peace around me." They're purporting to be men of peace.) They say, 'Let's watch him slip.'" And they're waiting for him to fall! They're saying, "perhaps we'll prevail and we'll take our revenge." Jeremiah recognizes the enemies that are around him may at times suddenly turn on him -even his close allies and friends!

And yet he has an ally, a close friend that is above them all. If we forget that he is the one that we are serving, how can we be a faithful servant? We are then serving our own appetites or we're then serving the people around us and we'll devour the lies of this world. But if we want this world to have what is good, if we want to ourselves be in the goodness of God, we consume his Word.

And the fire that also judges, saves. As his word tells us, "The Lord is with me." Jeremiah knew that despite even his closest friends turning against him, the Lord was with him. "The Lord is like a mighty warrior. So, my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fall and be thoroughly disgraced."

As you look at the history of what happened with Jeremiah, sure enough the warning of the fire and judgment came. Jeremiah spoke during a time when the sons and grandsons of good King Josiah had turned from the Lord. And only a generation after Jeremiah started his prophecies, the city walls of Jerusalem began to burn and were crumbled. The temple stones were torn down, and King Nebuchadnezzar carted off into exile tens of thousands. And what Jeremiah spoke of came true. They were thoroughly disgraced.

As for all those who wanted to push off the warning and the judgment, Jeremiah adds, "Their dishonor will never be forgotten." The judgment of God is everlasting. For those who rejected his Word, they remain outside of his kingdom and facing his wrath along with all the enemies of God.

But Jeremiah says, "Lord, you are with me." Jeremiah knows the one who came to remove the fire and the wrath, the true hero who truly had no one on his side, the one who came burning with the fire of the word of God as he came -the Word made flesh. Jesus, the son of God, could say all these same things. He was one who was persuaded he must carry out the work of the Lord. He carried out his Father's will perfectly. And Jesus, the chosen, the anointed one, came himself as the one who could not help but speak to the people the warning even though the people turned against him.

He continued faithfully. And for all the times that you and I tried to hold back and keep the Word in, he spoke it faithfully. The true servant of the Lord, your friend, says to you that you now have his righteousness. And this, Jesus, who faced the wrath of God on behalf of sinners atoned for all of our sin and for the sins of the world! He did this so that we might warn against the dangers of the fires of hell. He atoned and set them free so that we can not only proclaim judgment but salvation and mercy. The whole purpose Jeremiah spoke these words of "violence" and warning was that they might turn to the Lord.

It's the whole reason why we speak of the Word of God: to warn the sinner and to give the sinner the comfort and hope found in a friend named Jesus who atoned for their sin. And that same Jesus conquered the grave. He is the one who says he is always with us! So, we can say with Jeremiah "The Lord is with me!" And he is fighting for his church so that all the forces of evil and the enemies of God in the end will crumble and fall.

But those who fight for him will join with Jeremiah and say, "Lord you examine the righteous and probe the heart and mind. Let me see your vengeance on them. For to you I have committed my cause." The faithful servant of the Lord needs only be faithful -to commit their cause to God. And they say, "Lord let me receive your Word and let me speak it; for I can't help but speak of what I've seen and heard!"

"Sing to the Lord! Give praise to the Lord!" Because this is what he does: "He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked."

We don't know how long this game will be; but it's not a game. We don't know who is going to turn against us; but God never will. In the meantime, we're called to be servants of Christ. And faithful servants endure enmity, with the Lord on their side, and with the fire of his word. Amen.