

“RUIN, REDEMPTION, AND RESTORATION”
 Studies in the Book of Jeremiah
A Listening Heart vs A Wandering Heart
Jeremiah 37:1-21

INTRODUCTION: Effective listening is an active process that involves understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding to both verbal and non-verbal messages. By focusing on the speaker, we reduce misunderstandings and foster trust. This foundation is essential for meaningful communication, as attentive listening enables us to fully comprehend an act on important messages. As illustrated in Matthew 4:4, where Jesus emphasizes the importance of hearing and responding to God's word—'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'—we recognize that listening goes beyond simply hearing; it is about receiving guidance and responding faithfully. **(James 1:22)**

The word “listen”—along with closely related terms such as “*obey*” and “*hearken*”—appears with notable frequency throughout the book of Jeremiah. According to the concordance, “listen,” and its variants are cited *approximately 45 to 49* times in Jeremiah, making it one of the most prominent books for this term in the Bible. The Hebrew lexicons and Strong’s Concordance define the root word *shama* as “to hear,” “listen,” “*pay attention*,” and “obey.”

Background & Overview Jeremiah 37 presents a powerful lesson about the dangers of placing our trust in human institutions, like governments, rather than in God. In this chapter, King Zedekiah and the people of Judah look to Egypt for help against the Babylonian threat, hoping that political alliances and military support will deliver them. However, at this point in the scripture, Jeremiah has been consistently warning them for some time. That true security and hope come only from relying on God’s guidance and promises.

I. Listen Carefully to God’s Instructions to Avoid Dire Consequences (V1-10)

- A.** In the context of Jeremiah 37, the people of Judah—and especially their leaders—are urged to pay close attention to God’s guidance. Failing to listen to His instructions led to misunderstandings, poor decisions, and ultimately disastrous outcomes for the nation. Just as employees must listen during safety briefings to prevent workplace

accidents, God's people are called to listen carefully to His word to avoid spiritual and practical consequences in their lives. **(Psalm 85:8) (Proverbs 4:20-21) (Deuteronomy 32:46) (Malachi 2:2)**

B. Many people make the mistake of placing their hope in other humans, leaders, or material things—the "creature"—instead of trusting in the Creator, God Himself. The term "creature" refers to anything created, including people, institutions, or possessions, while the "Creator" is the one who made all things and holds ultimate authority and power. **(Proverbs 3:5-8)**

C. God's hand was upon the Chaldeans, guiding and empowering them as agents of His judgment against Judah. **(V8-10) (Exodus 9:16)**

II. Speaking Truth to Power: The Real Cost of Integrity (V11-16)

- A.** Throughout history, individuals who have dared to speak truth to those in authority have often paid a significant price. Whether the power in question is political, governmental, or corporate, the courage to confront wrongdoing can lead to retaliation, isolation, or loss. Yet, these courageous acts have the potential to inspire change and remind us that godly integrity often demands sacrifice.
- B.** In the context, the prophet Jeremiah serves as a powerful example. He confronted kings and officials with God's message, despite facing imprisonment and public scorn. His story, like those of modern whistleblowers, illustrates that while speaking truth to power may come with personal cost, it remains *essential for justice and genuine Kingdom transformation*.
- C.** John the Baptist exemplified "speaking truth to power" by fearlessly confronting King Herod Antipas about his unlawful marriage to his brother's wife, Herodias, leading to John's imprisonment and execution, as described in **Matthew 14:1-12**.

III. Nothing Is Hidden from the Wrath of God (V17-19)

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- A.** During a time of crisis in Jerusalem, King Zedekiah sought guidance from the prophet Jeremiah. Why did King Zedekiah speak to Jeremiah in secret and ask for a word from the Lord?
- B.** Zedekiah feared political backlash and ridicule from his officials and false prophets, since Jeremiah had consistently prophesied disaster for Jerusalem. As a result, Zedekiah chose to consult Jeremiah in secret, hoping to receive assurance without facing public accountability. **(Hebrews 4:13) (Psalm 139:7-12) (Jeremiah 16:17)**

IV. You Still Ain't Listening.(V20-21)

A. Ignoring God's guidance never ends well. His truth reaches every corner of our hearts. **(Hebrews 4:12)** And the cost of turning a deaf ear is far higher than many realize. The story of Judah is more than ancient history—it's a timely warning for anyone tempted to turn away from the voice of God leading them.

B. Samson's story, found in the Book of Judges, describes an Israelite judge miraculously born with superhuman strength given by God to defeat the Philistines. Although he was set apart for a special purpose, Samson's life began to unravel because he did not adhere to his Nazarite Priest vows. **No cutting his hair:** A razor was never to touch his head, symbolizing his dedication to God. **No contact with the dead:** He was forbidden from going near or touching any dead bodies. **No grape products:** He could not eat or drink anything that came from a grapevine. This included wine, fresh grapes, raisins, and even vinegar. **(Judges Chapters 13-16)**

C. Ignoring God's guidance, as shown in Samson's story, leads to painful consequences. The story of Judah, much like Samson's, *serves as a reminder that there are consequences for not listening to God's Kingdom principles and commands.*

Luke 8:15

But the *seed* in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

G.T.G

Rayfield Benton Jr. Pastor 6/28/26

3rd Saturday in Aug. Chapter 6
marriage ministry