**Jeremiah 23:16-29**

Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. **17** They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’ ” **18** For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened? **19**  Behold, the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked. **20**  The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly. **21**  “I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. **22**  But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds. **23**  “Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? **24**  Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord. **25** I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ **26** How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, **27** who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? **28**  Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the Lord. **29**  Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

**“Many Lies, One Living Word”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Galatians 1:3-5). Most do not look kindly at lying. Parents expose the far-fetched story of their child seeking to get out of trouble. Fans show disappointment if their iconic athlete turns out to be doping. Voters can never have much confidence in political candidates who keep changing their stories. If lying already hurts our neighbor and way of life as we have it. The deeper fact to face is the lies told against God and in the Name of God are far more devastating.

Herman Sasse comments, “History knows of no more unsettling spectacle than the judgment, which comes to pass when men of an advanced culture have rejected the truth and are now swallowed up in a sea of lies…If, according to the irrefutable testimony of history, this is the judgment of God on the lie, should God then not also punish the lie in His church? Truly He who is the Judge of all the world will do this! For the power of the lie extends even into the church.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Actually, much of the lying today in our culture goes back to the spiritual decay that either has deliberately mislead or refuses to speak God’s Word. Only the Lord by His grace cleanses and defends His Church against all falsehood so that the living Word of salvation is for us.

1. **The need for cleansing and defending has no value if falsehood just makes up fairytales.**
2. This was the shroud of deception among God’s people before the prophet Jeremiah.

* During his service to the Lord of four decades and five kings of Judah, he bore witness to the demise at hand.
* The last king, Zedekiah along with his servants and the people were deluded about Babylon backing off.
* The source of their problem to see the truth for what it was came from false prophets painting pictures that were the very opposite of judgment.
* Jeremiah said, “They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’

1. What value is there for cleansing and defending if falsehood is preferred over the truth?

* This is what we see today, the truth is up for grabs so we can be sure there are plenty of false prophets painting many pretty pictures.
* St. John the apostle already spoke of this imminent threat declaring, “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).
* The encroaching falsehood deluding God’s Word is a potent drug as Luther states, “But so it will be and must be. The people begin to feel secure and sing, ‘Peace; all is well.’ They simply persecute everything that accords with the will of God and disregard all the threating signs, until destruction suddenly surprises them and destroys them before they know it” (AE 35:282).
* Whether these empty hopes and visions of men come preaching in the “name” of science, some church dreamt up for today, or a therapeutic God ruled by feelings the lies all end the same way, death.

1. **The way of cleansing and defending comes by the truth God alone graciously gives.**
2. Jeremiah knew this way first had to put to death the sinner.

* Rather than avoidance caused by false prophets, God wanted His Law to do its work in full.
* He said, “But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.”
* Those that were codling God’s people to take life easy in truth had no care for them or their salvation.
* The security of hard hearts had to meet the harder truth, “Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

1. The way of cleansing and defending is an act of God’s grace, but who will bear it?

* Jesus removed the rose-colored glasses of false prophets for He preached how His cross would cast God’s fiery judgment against sinners on Him.
* The World and people’s lives would go on undisturbed if it were not for God’s Law intruding in upon our life.
* Many pulpits and pop-culture now proudly drown out the power of God’s Word that seeks to call all to repent, because it just sounds too negative.
* Yet, the Law to unrepentant hearts is a positive thing by God’s grace. It takes off the blinders, so sorrow over sin and death lets the Gospel shine God’s light of love upon sinners.

1. **The purpose with cleansing and defending is to center on the living Word that saves.**
2. Jeremiah was called, “The Weeping” prophet, because the people had a narrow vision rather than trusting in the greater purpose God saw fit for them.

* He told them, “The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly.”
* The straw of falsity was going to soon burn up before them before the Babylonians.
* Yet, God’s faithful Word would the wheat to give them hope when they went into exile.
* This Word was more than a rightness of the Law, but the heart of God was always to work forgiveness, life, and salvation for sinners.

1. The purpose of cleansing and defending is to prepare sinners to receive God’s gift of salvation.

* In these latter days, it has all become clear as St. John says, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).
* Rather than the fantasies of false prophets, the faithfulness of the Word become flesh promises God is not far off, but near to every bitter sin, painful death, and temptation of the Devil.
* By baptism, the old Adam has lost his say and daily that old self now dies to the living Christ who saved us by His judgement.
* This salvation comes to broken and needy not with the straw of empty bread and wine, but His true body and blood present to feed His exiles with fullness of peace the world cannot give.

If there is much lying today, best to start praying first for the church and especially the servants of God’s Word. False misleading or refusing to speak the Law only hardens hearts and can never turn them to faith in Christ who alone is the Gospel. Face the fire for what it is of your sin and death, but not apart from the heart of God’s plan to repent and see Jesus Christ for you. Only the Lord by His grace cleanses and defends His Church against all falsehood so that the living Word of salvation is for us. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen

1. http://www.pseudepigraph.us/2015/03/20/sasse-the-lie-kills-nations/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)