

Were you the person always afraid of tests in school? Afraid because you didn't know the material, hadn't paid much attention during class, and now the night before the test you needed to do some major cramming. Your biggest worry was the teacher asking a whole bunch of questions you didn't prepare for. That's an uncomfortable position to be in. Where did you find comfort?

Thankfully some left school tests long in the past. But that doesn't mean times of testing have stopped. We can still face tests at work; tests of character, tests of our abilities, and tests of our time management. We still face tests at home; tests of our patience, tests of our finances, and tests of our willpower. Life can feel like we're sitting for a test we don't know the answers too. Sometimes tests put us in an uncomfortable position. Where will we find comfort?

The prophet Jeremiah faced testing each day of his life too. God called him to preach and teach the people, but the message he gave was tough. It sounded harsh and critical. As expected the people responded with a backlash. Jeremiah was in an extremely uncomfortable position. But in the first lesson for today Jeremiah recorded for us where his comfort came from...

**God's our comfort in testing
God will do something
God always does what's right**

Doctors give difficult messages to people. "There's nothing more we can do." Police share difficult messages with people. "We found the car, but it's a total loss." What makes these messages difficult? The person hearing them won't like it. Jeremiah spoke to the Israelites about their future. **"Therefore this is what the Lord says: I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape. Although they cry out to me, I will not listen to them."** Israel's future wasn't too bright. Their country would be destroyed; they would be made slaves all because they disobeyed God. It was a difficult message because the people didn't respond kindly to it.

Jeremiah never wavered in his proclamation, even when it brought unbelievable testing. Some tests were so secret Jeremiah didn't even know about them. **"Let us destroy the tree and its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more."** The people were planning on not only giving him a bad name and discouraging his preaching, but they wanted to kill Jeremiah too. Jeremiah had no idea.

We haven't been given Jeremiah's responsibility to share bad news. That doesn't mean we escape testing. Simply living your Christian life brings testing. A friend asks you about the recent decision in another Lutheran church body to allow homosexuals to serve as pastors. You respond with sadness about a church body claiming to follow Scripture stepping so far away from what Scripture proclaims about the sin of homosexuality. If that friend calls you intolerant or close minded, you're facing testing. How you respond, how you accept it, and where you look for comfort is the line between sin and faith.

Wildfires this past summer again caused thousands to flee their homes, running in the face of danger. Firefighters called to serve can't run from danger, they run towards it. Jeremiah did the same thing. Facing secret plots to kill him and a people who didn't want to listen, Jeremiah kept proclaiming God's Word. He did because he had the comfort of knowing God would do something. He already had. **"Because the Lord revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing."** God exposed their plot against Jeremiah out of love. Jeremiah didn't have to worry or be afraid because God knew and was keeping him safe in spite of their wicked plans.

When opposition and testing go against us we can feel like Jeremiah, kind of like a lamb being led to death even though it doesn't know it. But Jeremiah's words remind me of another Lamb led to slaughter spoken about by the prophet Isaiah. **"The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter."** Christ Jesus was that lamb led to death on the cross. Shedding his blood so our sins wouldn't make us shed ours. Facing down the test of the cross to forgive us the times we ran from testing. Staring death in the face and winning to forgive us every time we bowed to opposition instead of standing up for faith. In times of testing your confidence is sure because Jesus already has done something.

Parents know what to do when you get sunburned. They know who to call if you back the car into a mailbox. They know where to go when you need medical attention. Parents always seem to know what to do, but are they always right? Our heavenly Father promises that in our times of testing he's there to do something about it. He might not take action immediately, but he promises to do something. And when he does it will always be right.

Jeremiah couldn't see people's hearts. He didn't know their attitude or motives. God did, and Jeremiah knew that God did. **"But, O LORD Almighty, you who judge righteously and test the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you I have committed my cause."** Jeremiah had problems, but he turned them over to God. Now they were God's problems. If these people wanted to oppose God's prophet, they opposed God. Jeremiah's biggest challenge was not doing anything. He wanted vengeance, but not sinful revenge. Jeremiah knew whatever God did would be perfectly right. But in order to not sin Jeremiah had to let God do it.

I know some of you are worried about the actions of our President and Congress. You fear the loss of religious freedoms. You fear the economy will only get worse and possibly collapse all together. You fear the government's takeover of industry. And your worst fear is knowing there's not much you can do about it. But fear and worry over things we can't control is sinful and doubts God. Thinking we must control everything in order to avoid testing is sinful.

Jesus was the promise of action by God, and the action he took was absolutely perfect. He told the disciples in the gospel, **"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise."** Betrayal and death were the right things to do for Christ. They were right because through them Jesus paid for all our sins. Through them Jesus gave us assurance that though the world around us might attack, God is doing just the right thing for us. Our loss of control allows God to be in control. Our problems as Christians are the Lord's problems. In Christ he will do what's right every single time.

So how is this going to change how you live your life? Knowing and being confident that God judges correctly means you don't have to strike back at those that strike you. Let God judge them. Don't have grudges or vengeance, but practice forgiveness and compassion. Allow people to speak against you as you speak about Jesus. Answer their questions, respond to their objections with Scripture, but don't fight back with harsh words or violence. Let the gospel shine in how you speak. Let forgiveness flow from you to others. It starts with God who always does what's right.

When the teacher announces a test, panic might be your first emotion. Anxiety, pressure to do well, and fear of failure might follow. Comfort certainly does not. Testing in our lives might bring anxiety, pressure, and fear. Certainly not comfort. But for the Christian resting securely in Christ God promises to act and he promises that when he does it will always be the right thing for us. There in Christ we have confidence knowing that God's our comfort in testing.