Lord Sanctify us by the truth, your Word is Truth. Amen.

My dear friends,

“Mark my words, I will make sure you regret this.” The look in his eyes left no doubt that this was no empty threat. He wasn’t just blowing off steam. If something wasn’t done to fix this, trouble was brewing, and you did not want trouble with him. “You have my word.” They looked each other in the eyes, shook hands, and parted certain that what was promised would be done. The word of a trustworthy man is not taken lightly.

More and more, it seems like it is harder to just take someone at their word. How can we trust someone’s word in a culture of fake news, biased studies, advocates masquerading as experts? How can we trust someone’s word when so many are willing to massage the truth to get ahead? How can we trust someone’s word when we don’t always know ourselves what is true, when we know those times that we choose to believe what we want to be true instead of what is good and right? Whose word can we trust if we at time cannot even trust our own?

Throughout the prophets, but especially in Jeremiah, you find these word, “Declares the LORD!” At a time of competing voices, at a time of confusion, at a time of uncertainty, this is the Word of the LORD. Today, through his prophet God warns us and encourages us, You have the Word of the Lord, Listen to this instead of pleasant lies and speak this Word faithfully.

No one wants to listen to you Jeremiah! Can you blame them? Who wants to hear that God was furious with them? Who wants to hear that their lives, their worship, their faithless hearts are unacceptable before God? Who wants to hear about his wrath, their impending destruction? No one wanted to listen to Jeremiah, but plenty of other voices arose to say something a little more pleasant. Prophets proclaimed they saw visions of an even more prosperous Jerusalem. They proclaimed a time of peace was just around the corner. Priests said everything was fine, their sacrifices were being offered, they had all their bases covered. The Lord, Baal, as long as they were getting what was owed, the people were perfectly safe. Peace, safety, security, good times, you don’t have to change a thing, that’s a message everyone wants to hear.

But the Lord did not leave those self-proclaimed prophets unanswered, **This is what the LORD of Armies says. Do not listen to the words of the prophets…they are giving you false hope. They proclaim vsions that come from their own heart and not from the mouth of the Lord…have any of them stood in the council of the Lord?**

It wasn’t just what they were saying, but what they left unsaid, what they denied. They were worse than any meteorologist who didn’t think the storm would shift so far south. They wouldn’t even mention the storm. They saw sunny skies when everyone was supposed to be taking shelter and calling for God’s mercy. **Look! A storm from the Lord! His wrath has gone out like a whirlwind twisting down, whirling over the heads of the wicked.** This storm wasn’t going to miss. **The LORD’s anger will not turn back until he has completely fulfilled the purposes of his heart.**

Everyone loves the stories, quickly they are shared across the internet and on morning radio shows. New study shows beer is good for you. New study says a glass of wine can improve your wellbeing. People who drink coffee live longer researchers say. Or perhaps you have noticed, fake news is anything you don’t like, but the sources that agree with you, those are always trustworthy. Things get shared, spread around, liked, sometimes even without anyone reading the details, sometimes even when the details really aren’t so favorable. That doesn’t matter as long as the news, the study says something we want to hear.

There are all kinds of spiritual lies out there, which are your favorites? You can peruse the Christian books at your local store or Hobby Lobby and find authors who claim they have a special message from God or that Jesus is calling to them, and the message is often the same, God has this super special amazing awesome plan for your life, a plan that involves success and victory, but though it may involve hard work and some sort of faith, it certainly doesn’t require repentance. It doesn’t look to God’s promise of eternal life, though that might be assumed, but it looks to our dreams and desires for right now. Most of the largest churches in America have a different lie, Sin is okay, well those things that people used to call sins, after all sin is relative. Paul lived in a different culture, so he didn’t understand that love is love. Or they lie, a loving God couldn’t send anyone to hell, well at least not the good people, just do your best, get your gold star for the day, or get two tomorrow, it will all work out. Forget about God’s justice. Forget about his judgment. Forget that Jesus overturned tables, and continually rebuked sin and warned of his coming judgment. None of that matters as long as you’re a nice person. The culture lies, God is far away. God can’t really see, he won’t do anything to us. These horrible things that are happening in the world, these acts of hate, they aren’t the result of a world without the fear of the Lord. If God exists at all, he isn’t really involved in the day to day. He doesn’t really care what we do. And all these messages lead the same place, don’t worry about God. Don’t worry about his law and your sin. Everything is fine.

Instead of these pleasant lies, you have Lord’s Word. Do not listen to them! Jesus says by their fruit you will know them. Do these voices agree with what the Lord says? While we’re at it, does this voice agree with his Word? You have that word! Read it. Listen to it. Do what it says! By their fruit you will know them, the Lord told Jeremiah **if they had stood in my council, they would have made my people hear my words and they would have turned from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.**

My friends, you have the Lord’s Word. It calls to repentance. It warns against sin. It warns of the coming judgment. The Lord stood by his word to Judah. He stood by his condemnation of those false prophets. He will stand by his warnings to the world, to those who cling to their sin, to those who despise him and everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart. You have the Lord’s Word, he calls you to repentance, to turn from sin, and to turn to his true promises, to his restoration to his salvation, to the forgiveness Chrsit has purchased and won for you. You have the Word of the Lord, Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah wrote, **As I live, declares the LORD god, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from their evil ways and live.** You have the Word of the Lord, God’s Son, in the flesh, **Come to me all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest.** You have the Word of the Lord, **I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will live even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.** You have the Lord’s Word and he stands by it for you to hear and listen to and it is so much more comforting than all the lies, **If you forgive anyone their sins, they are forgiven.**

You can’t help but wonder what these false prophets hoped to gain. Everyone would know the truth soon enough. Maybe they really didn’t know that Jeremiah spoke the truth. Maybe they just didn’t care, they hoped it wouldn’t come in their lives, or in true evil, they simply hated the Lord and his message and hoped that if they spoke the lie enough it would become true, or that truth was dependent on public opinion polls, 90% of Israelites believe that we are doing just fine. How did they hope to get away with lying in God’s name? Well, really, did God really care? He hadn’t stopped them yet.

You might not believe this, but I have an opinion on nearly everything, at least on those things that I have thought about. Okay sometimes I have opinions on things I know almost nothing about, but hey, who doesn’t? So if you want to know what I think about diet or exercise, you could ask and maybe I would share. Or if you wanted my opinion on great hikes, I could tell you. If you wanted my opinions on education, healthcare, on foreign policy, I have thoughts on all of them. But they don’t belong here, no opinion does. People can have, they can even share all kinds of opinions, thoughts, philosophies, dreams, but none of them belong with the Word of God. God told his people, **Let the prophet who has his dream tell his dream.** Discuss what’s on your mind, reason out what it means, what might be true or false, what might be imagination. But by no means consider this as a message from God, **but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully** in all truth, for **what does chaff,** which breaks off and blows away forever, **to do with grain? Declares the Lord.**

We are overwhelmed with information. Some is true. Some is useful. Some might be a mix of truth and imagination. Some may be all imagination, all false. We have our own thoughts, our own dreams, our own knowledge that which we either think or know to be true, that which we imagine, that which we have carefully considered, and we are able to share our thoughts. Christians don’t need to be walking Bible quotes; however, do we imagine that our thoughts and knowledge is what this world needs? That our opinions are what your neighbor needs to hear? That the things we want to happen will make this world better? The winds of time will blow this chaff away, You have the Lord’s Word! Speak it faithfully. Share it in truth.

To be a man of his word or a woman of her word means you are a person those around you can trust. Certainly, our society would benefit if everyone would speak the truth and hold to their word. But even so, we have our limitations, we never have all the facts. We never have complete control in every circumstance. So for us, for the people of God, how important it is for us to be people of His Word. Hearing it. Reading it. Living it. And always ready to speak his word faithfully. Dear Christians, You have the Lord’s Word,this is a blessing, a comfort, a power. **Is not my word like a fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock to pieces?** His Word is truth. His word never fails This word changes hearts. This word turns the sinner. This word gives life, and the Lord has given his word to you. Amen.