WARRIORS OF WARFARE

Don't Shoot the Messenger

PART TWO

The Cost of the Message

Faithful messengers are rarely popular ones.

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PART 2 OVERVIEW

Being chosen to carry God's Word is a privilege — but Scripture never promises it will be painless. Part 2 examines the very real cost of faithful proclamation. From Jeremiah's lament in the pit, to the apostles' beatings in the book of Acts, to the stoning of Stephen, God's messengers have always paid a price for speaking truth. This session asks: *When the message costs everything, will you still deliver it?*

TEACHING: WHEN FAITHFULNESS COMES WITH A PRICE

1. The Messenger Did Not Write the Message

One of the most disarming truths for a messenger under fire is this: **you did not write the message — God did.** The impulse to water it down, soften its edges, or withhold it entirely comes from forgetting this fundamental fact. Jeremiah famously tried to stop prophesying when the cost became too great, and discovered he could not (Jeremiah 20:9). The word of God was like fire shut up in his bones.

> *"But if I say, 'I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,' his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot."*
>
> **— Jeremiah 20:9 (NIV)**

When you have genuinely encountered the living God and been entrusted with His Word, silence becomes more painful than speaking — regardless of the cost.

2. Three Categories of Cost

Scripture reveals that faithful messengers typically bear costs in three areas:

- **Relational cost:** Families divide over truth (Matthew 10:34–36). Friends walk away. Community ties are severed when the messenger refuses to compromise.
- **Reputational cost:** Jeremiah was called a traitor. Paul was labelled a troublemaker. Jesus was called demon-possessed. Carrying God's counter-cultural message invites misrepresentation.
- **Physical and material cost:** Imprisonment, beatings, financial loss, and for many throughout church history, death. The prosperity of faithfulness is often measured in an entirely different currency than the world uses.

3. The Danger of the Comfortable Pulpit

One of the subtlest corruptions a messenger can face is the seduction of comfort. When a messenger's livelihood depends on the approval of those who receive the message, the temptation to shape the message around their preferences becomes enormous. Paul warned Timothy about this: *'For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear'* (2 Timothy 4:3). A messenger who only delivers comfortable messages has stopped being a messenger and become an entertainer.

4. The Cross Is the Ultimate Cost

No messenger paid a higher price for faithfulness than Jesus Himself. He was the Word made flesh (John 1:14), and the world did not receive Him (John 1:11). He was despised, rejected, falsely accused, tortured, and executed — not for any wrong He committed, but for the truth He embodied. The cross is not merely the atonement for our sins; it is also the definitive statement that faithfulness to God's message will be opposed by the fallen world — and that God redeems that opposition into resurrection glory.

> *"Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."*
>
> **— Matthew 10:38–39 (NIV)**

5. Counting the Cost Before You Carry the Message

Jesus urged His followers to count the cost before committing (Luke 14:28). This is not pessimism — it is wisdom. A messenger who has never reckoned with the possibility of rejection, opposition, or loss will fold under pressure the first time they encounter it. But a messenger who has already settled the question — *'Is God worth this?'* — will stand when others run. The answer to that question, rooted in the truth of who God is and what He has done, is the bedrock of courageous proclamation.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever held back from speaking God's truth because of fear of rejection or conflict? What was the situation, and what happened?

2. Read Jeremiah 20:7–9. Have you ever felt 'fire shut up in your bones' — a truth you were compelled to speak even when it was costly? Describe that experience.

3. Paul describes his own suffering as 'light and momentary troubles achieving an eternal weight of glory' (2 Corinthians 4:17). How does an eternal perspective change the way you view present costs?

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4. What is the difference between a messenger who is bold and one who is simply harsh? How do you balance truth and love in your communication?

5. In what specific area of your life is God calling you to a greater level of faithfulness, even if it costs you something you treasure?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Choose at least two of the following to put into practice this week:

1. **Write your 'worth it' declaration:** In your journal, write out a personal declaration of why following God's call is worth any cost. Be specific. Reference His faithfulness in your own life.
2. **Pray for persecuted believers:** Research one country where Christians face serious persecution. Pray for them by name if possible, and allow their faithfulness to inspire and fortify your own.
3. **Have the hard conversation:** Is there someone in your life who needs to hear a loving, truthful word from you? Pray, prepare, and have that conversation this week.
4. **Fast one meal:** Use the hunger as a physical reminder to pray for the courage of God's messengers worldwide — and for your own courage in your specific context.
5. **Study Stephen's martyrdom:** Read Acts 6:8 – 7:60 in one sitting. Note what Stephen said, how his accusers responded, and what Stephen saw at the moment of his death. What does this reveal about the value God places on faithful messengers?

✦ MEMORY VERSE ✦

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."

Romans 1:16 (NIV)

Next session — PART 3: Standing Firm When They Shoot · 'The armor of the faithful messenger.'

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