

The Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 19: The Scroll Burned and Rewritten

Jeremiah 36:1-32

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this chapter is a vivid drama of the authority, endurance, and indestructibility of the word of God. God commands the scroll written for a merciful purpose, that people might hear, fear, repent, and be forgiven (36:3). When the king burns it, God simply commands it rewritten and enlarged (36:28, 32). The lesson teaches that no human power, however exalted, can destroy or silence God's word; the parchment burns, but the word stands forever (Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23-25). The teacher should anchor confidence in Scripture here: God's word is authoritative, enduring, and finally complete in Christ, the living and abiding word.

The chapter also exposes the anatomy of a hardened heart against the contrast of a tender one. The officials tremble (36:16); the king calmly cuts and burns and is not afraid (36:24). God's word always divides hearers into those who tremble and turn and those who harden and resist. The teacher should set Jehoiakim beside his father Josiah, who tore his clothes at the reading of the Law (2 Kings 22:11), and beside God's own commendation of the one who "trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). The point is not academic; every hearer is being sorted by the word even now.

Beyond doctrine, the lesson aims at transformation in how students receive the Scriptures. The goal is that they leave with a settled confidence in the word that cannot be burned, and with a tender, trembling, obedient heart toward it, refusing the subtle 'scribe's knife' by which we cut out the passages and convictions we would rather not face. Ultimately it points to the Lord Jesus, the Word who stands forever, who calls every hearer to receive Him with humble, obedient faith rather than hardened unbelief.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read 36:1-8. God tells Jeremiah to write all His words on a scroll, hoping the people "may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive" (36:3). What does this reveal about why God speaks His word, even words of warning, and about His heart toward sinners?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with God's stated purpose, because it changes how we read everything that follows. God gathers more than twenty years of warning onto a single scroll for a reason of pure mercy: "that everyone may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin" (36:3). Even the hardest words of judgment are spoken so that people might repent and be saved.

This guards us against a caricature of God as eager to condemn. The God of Jeremiah 36 writes down the disaster precisely so it need not fall. Warning is a form of love; the lifeguard who shouts 'danger' is not against the swimmer but for him. God's word of judgment is His outstretched hand.

Teach the heart of God here. He "has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). The whole scroll exists because God would rather forgive than destroy. Every warning in Scripture is an invitation in disguise.

Apply it warmly. When the Bible confronts us with hard truth, that confrontation is mercy, God loving us enough to tell us the truth so we can turn. The right response to a warning is not resentment but gratitude and repentance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's merciful purpose in His word, even in warning (36:3).
- Warning as an expression of love, not eagerness to condemn (Ezekiel 33:11).
- God's desire to forgive rather than destroy.
- Hard truth in Scripture received as mercy that calls us to turn.
- The danger of resenting the warnings that are meant to save us.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God write down even words of judgment?
- How is a warning actually an expression of love?
- How should we respond when Scripture confronts us with hard truth?

Question 2

Student Question:

Baruch faithfully wrote and then publicly read the dangerous words God gave (36:4–8). Where is God asking you to be a faithful 'Baruch,' carrying or speaking His word even when it is risky or unwelcome?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question turns the spotlight on Baruch. Jeremiah, barred from the temple, dictates the dangerous words, and Baruch writes them and then reads them aloud in public (36:4–8). It is a quietly courageous act; he is putting his name and safety to God's unwelcome message.

Help students see that most of us are not called to be Jeremiahs but we are often called to be Baruchs, those who faithfully carry, write down, share, and speak the word God has given. Baruch did not have to compose the message; he had to be faithful with it.

Name the risk honestly. Speaking God's word can cost us, awkwardness, disapproval, even hostility (Baruch and Jeremiah soon have to hide, 36:19, 26). Faithfulness does not always feel safe. But the word is too important, and the souls who need it too precious, to keep silent.

Move to something concrete. Invite each person to name one place where God may be asking them to be a faithful Baruch, a conversation, a class, a relationship, where His word needs to be carried, and one brave next step.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithfulness in carrying and speaking God's word (36:4–8).
- The ordinary courage of being a 'Baruch,' not only a 'Jeremiah.'
- Counting the real cost of sharing unwelcome truth.
- Valuing souls enough to risk speaking.

Discussion Prompts

- Where is God asking you to faithfully carry His word?
- What risk or cost makes you hesitate to speak it?
- What is one brave next step of faithfulness this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 36:11–19. When the officials heard the words, they “turned to one another in fear” and knew the king must be told. What does godly fear in the presence of God's word look like, and why is it a healthy and right response?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When the officials hear the scroll, they “turned to one another in fear” (36:16). This trembling is not cowardice; it is the right and healthy response of a heart that recognizes it is hearing the voice of God. The word has landed, and they know it matters eternally.

Teach the biblical meaning of the fear of God. It is not terror that drives us from God but reverent awe that takes Him seriously, the trembling Isaiah commends in the one ‘contrite in spirit’ who ‘trembles at my word’ (Isaiah 66:2). To tremble at God's word is to treat it as what it is, the speech of the living God.

Contrast this in advance with the king who is coming. The officials feel the weight; Jehoiakim will feel nothing. The same word produces trembling in some and hardness in others. The difference is not the word but the heart.

Apply it tenderly. A heart that can still be moved by Scripture is a great mercy. If you read a hard passage and feel its weight, thank God; a tender conscience is a gift to be guarded, not despised.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Godly fear and trembling as the right response to God's word (36:16; Isaiah 66:2).
- The fear of God as reverent awe, not mere terror.
- The same word producing trembling in some and hardness in others.
- A tender conscience as a mercy to be guarded.
- Taking God's speech seriously as the voice of the living God.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to 'tremble' at God's word?
- Why is a tender, movable heart toward Scripture a mercy?
- Why does the same word soften some and harden others?

Question 4

Student Question:

The officials trembled at God's word, yet still had to decide what to do with it (36:16–19). When the Scriptures stir conviction in you, what helps you move from being moved to actually obeying?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question presses past mere emotion. The officials trembled, yet they still had to decide what to do with the word, whom to tell, how to act (36:16–19). Being moved is not the same as obeying. Many a sermon stirs feeling on Sunday that has evaporated by Monday.

Help students see the gap between conviction and action. James warns against being a hearer who looks in the mirror and walks away forgetting what he saw (James 1:22–24). The danger is not that we are unmoved but that we mistake being moved for having obeyed.

Offer practical bridges from feeling to doing: naming the specific step the text requires, telling someone for accountability, acting quickly before the impression fades, and praying for the will to do and not just to feel. Conviction is the spark; obedience is the fire that must be tended.

Move to a concrete resolve. Invite each person to recall a recent time Scripture moved them, and to name the one act of obedience they still owe, and to take it this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gap between being moved and actually obeying (James 1:22–24).
- Conviction as the beginning, not the end, of response.
- Practical bridges from feeling to obedience: naming the step, acting quickly, accountability.
- The danger of mistaking emotion for obedience.

Discussion Prompts

- When did Scripture last move you, and did you act on it?
- What keeps conviction from turning into obedience?
- What is one specific step you can take before the impression fades?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read 36:20–26. As the scroll is read, King Jehoiakim cuts it column by column and burns it, and “neither the king nor any of his servants... was afraid.” What does this calm, deliberate destruction of God’s word reveal about the nature of a hardened heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now the chilling center of the chapter (36:20–26). The king sits in his warm winter house, the fire burning. As the scroll is read, three or four columns at a time, he takes a scribe’s knife, cuts off each portion, and throws it into the fire “until the entire scroll was consumed.” And the verdict: “neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid” (36:24).

This is what a hardened heart looks like, and it is more frightening than open rage. There is no trembling, no tearing of garments, no fear. He has heard the very word of God and felt nothing. The calm is the horror. A heart can hear truth so often, and resist it so long, that it stops feeling anything at all.

Teach how hardness develops. It is rarely a single act; it is a settled pattern of saying no until the conscience grows callused (Hebrews 3:13, hardened ‘by the deceitfulness of sin’). Jehoiakim’s knife is the end of a long road of refusing God. Each ignored conviction makes the next easier to ignore.

Apply it soberly. The most dangerous spiritual condition is not to weep over sin but to feel nothing about it. Pray with the students that God would keep their hearts tender, and warn that the small, repeated ‘no’ to God is how big hardness begins.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The calm, deliberate destruction of God’s word as a picture of hardness (36:23).
- Hardness more dangerous than rage: hearing God and feeling nothing (36:24).
- Hardening as a gradual pattern of resisting conviction (Hebrews 3:13).
- The callused conscience and the loss of holy fear.
- The peril of feeling nothing about one’s own sin.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the king’s calm more frightening than anger would be?
- How does a heart become hardened over time?
- Why is feeling nothing about sin so dangerous?

Question 6

Student Question:

Jehoiakim thought destroying the scroll would silence its message and protect him from it (36:23). What 'scrolls' are you tempted to cut and burn, the passages, convictions, or warnings you would rather not face, and why?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question brings the scribe's knife into our own hands. Jehoiakim cut away the parts of the scroll he could not bear and burned them. We are tempted to do a quieter version: to skip, explain away, or simply ignore the passages, convictions, and warnings that press on us where we do not want to change.

Help students name their 'scrolls.' For one it is the teaching on the tongue; for another, on money or generosity; for another, on sexual purity, forgiveness, humility, or the seriousness of falling away. We all have texts we would rather not face. The knife is subtle: 'that doesn't really apply to me,' 'that was for another time,' 'surely God doesn't mean that.'

Expose the futility, as the chapter does. Cutting a passage from our reading does not cut it from reality. The word Jehoiakim burned still came true. The convictions we avoid do not disappear; they wait for us. We cannot edit God's truth by refusing to read it.

Move to honesty. Invite each person to name one 'scroll' they have been avoiding, and to bring it back, to read it, sit under it, and let it do its searching work this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The subtle 'scribe's knife' by which we edit out unwelcome Scripture.
- Common 'scrolls' we avoid: the tongue, money, purity, forgiveness, falling away.
- The futility of ignoring truth we do not wish to face.
- Letting the avoided word back in to do its searching work.

Discussion Prompts

- Which passages or convictions are you tempted to 'cut and burn'?
- What rationalizations do you use to avoid them?
- What would it look like to bring that 'scroll' back this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read 36:27–28. God simply says, “Take another scroll and write on it all the former words.” What does the indestructibility of God’s word teach us about its authority and its endurance over every human attempt to silence it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God’s response to the bonfire is breathtaking in its calm: “Take another scroll and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll” (36:28). No panic, no scramble. The king destroyed paper; he did not touch the word. God simply has it written again.

Teach the indestructibility and authority of God’s word. Empires have tried to burn Bibles, ban them, outlaw them, ridicule them away, and the word stands still. “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever” (Isaiah 40:8). “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

Notice where the real authority lies. Jehoiakim was the most powerful man in Judah, with a knife and a fire and a throne, and he was helpless against a sentence of God. Human power can destroy the messenger, the medium, even the prophet, but not the message. The word outlasts every hand raised against it.

Apply it as comfort and challenge. Comfort: the Bible you hold is not fragile; it has survived every attempt to silence it and will survive ours. Challenge: since the word cannot be destroyed, the only sane response is not to fight it but to submit to it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The indestructibility of God’s word (36:28; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35).
- God’s calm sovereignty over every attempt to silence Him.
- Human power able to destroy the messenger but not the message.
- The futility of opposing the word that stands forever.
- Submission, not resistance, as the only sane response.

Discussion Prompts

- What does God’s calm command to rewrite reveal about His word?
- Why has every attempt to destroy the Scriptures failed?
- If the word cannot be silenced, what is the only wise response?

Question 8

Student Question:

The king could burn the parchment but not the word that stands forever (36:28). How does the permanence and authority of Scripture give you confidence and rest in a world that constantly dismisses or edits God’s truth?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question turns the indestructibility of the word into personal rest. We live in a world that constantly dismisses, edits, mocks, or 'updates' God's truth, and it can leave believers feeling that Scripture is on the losing side of history. Jeremiah 36 says otherwise.

Help students draw strength from the permanence of the word. The scroll outlived the king who burned it. The Scriptures have outlived every empire and every fashionable objection. We do not have to be anxious defenders of a fragile book; we get to be confident witnesses to a word that abides forever (1 Peter 1:25).

Connect it to daily peace. When the culture says one thing and the Bible says another, the believer can rest, not because we always win the argument, but because the word will outlast the argument. We build our lives on the rock that does not move (Matthew 7:24-25).

Move to a concrete posture. Invite each person to name one area where cultural pressure tempts them to doubt or soften Scripture, and to consciously rest their confidence on the word that stands forever.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Confidence and rest in the permanence of God's word (1 Peter 1:25).
- Freedom from anxiety about Scripture 'losing' to the culture.
- Building life on the unshakable word (Matthew 7:24-25).
- Holding firm where cultural pressure tempts us to soften truth.

Discussion Prompts

- Where does cultural pressure tempt you to doubt or edit Scripture?
- How does the permanence of God's word give you rest?
- What does it mean to build your life on the word that abides forever?

Question 9

Student Question:

Read 36:29-32. The rewritten scroll is restored with "many similar words... added," and carries judgment on Jehoiakim for despising it. What does this teach about the authority of God's word, the futility of opposing it, and how the same word now stands complete and fulfilled in Christ as the living and abiding word that judges and saves?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest block of the lesson, gathering the chapter's themes. The rewritten scroll is not merely replaced but enlarged: "there were added besides unto them many similar words" (36:32). The attempt to reduce God's word ended by increasing it. And the new scroll carries a

personal verdict on the king (36:30–31): because he burned the word and despised it, judgment falls on him and his house. Opposing the word does not weaken it; it only condemns the opposer.

Teach the authority of God's word at full strength. Jehoiakim set his will against God's word and lost everything; his proud knife could not cut a single sentence out of reality. This is the futility of all opposition to Scripture. The word is not on trial before us; we are on trial before it. It judges every hearer (Hebrews 4:12–13).

Now carry it forward to Christ, where the word finds its fullness. The same God who spoke through Jeremiah has now "spoken to us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:1–2). All the Scriptures, the law and the prophets, find their goal and fulfillment in the Lord Jesus (Luke 24:44; 2 Corinthians 1:20). The word that could not be burned is, at its deepest, the living Word who took on flesh, died, rose, and abides forever (John 1:1, 14).

Press the two-edged truth that this living word both judges and saves. To Jehoiakim it was judgment, because he hardened against it. To everyone who receives it with a humble, obedient heart it is new birth and life: "you have been born again... through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). The same word that condemns the proud saves the contrite. The difference, again, is the heart that receives it.

Land it pastorally and evangelistically. The word that stands complete in Christ is set before each of us, and we cannot finally avoid it; we can only respond. We may take the scribe's knife to it and be judged by it, or we may bow to it, believe, repent, confess, be baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4), and be saved by it. The scroll will outlast us all. Blessed are those it finds trembling and turning.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's word increased, not reduced, by the attempt to destroy it (36:32).
- The futility of opposing Scripture; judgment on the one who despises it (36:30–31).
- The word as judge of every hearer (Hebrews 4:12–13).
- All Scripture fulfilled and complete in Christ, the living Word (Hebrews 1:1–2; Luke 24:44; John 1:1, 14).
- The same word judging the proud and giving new birth to the humble (1 Peter 1:23).
- The call to receive the word in obedient faith, believing and being baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4).

Discussion Prompts

- Why did the attempt to destroy the word only enlarge it?
- How does the same word both judge and save, depending on the heart?
- How does all of Scripture find its fulfillment in Christ, the living Word?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole chapter, the word written, read, burned, and rewritten. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus is calling you to receive His word with a trembling, obedient heart rather than a hardened, unafraid one.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone calls students from study to surrender. Look back across the whole chapter: the word written in mercy, read in public, trembled at by some, burned by a king, and calmly rewritten and enlarged by God. Through it all, one question presses on every heart, will the word find me tender or hard?

Press for one specific thing. Where is the Lord Jesus inviting a trembling, obedient response this week, a 'scroll' to stop avoiding, a conviction to finally act on, a hardness to confess, a soft and reverent heart to ask Him for?

Tie it explicitly to Christ. The word that could not be burned is ultimately the living Word, Jesus Himself, who stands forever and before whom every heart is laid bare. We are formed not by gritting our teeth against the Bible but by receiving Him with humble, obedient faith.

Invite each person to name their 'one thing' aloud or on paper, and to carry it into the week, asking God for the tender, trembling heart He commends and promising to obey the word they have heard.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Moving from knowledge to a tender, obedient response (James 1:22).
- Christ the living Word who stands forever and lays every heart bare.
- Receiving Scripture with trembling humility rather than hardness.
- Formation through obedient faith in the Lord Jesus.

Discussion Prompts

- Does God's word more often find you tender or hard, and why?
- What is the one obedient step you will take in response this week?
- How does receiving Christ, the living Word, change the way you read Scripture?