

# Jeremiah 38:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?

## Analysis

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**If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death?** Jeremiah's opening question reveals the prophet's precarious position. The Hebrew verb *nagad* (נָגַד, "to declare/tell") carries the sense of making something openly known. Jeremiah had already proclaimed God's judgment requiring surrender to Babylon—a message so politically inflammatory that it had landed him in a muddy cistern (38:6). His fear was justified: prophets who spoke unpopular truth often faced execution (26:20-23).

**If I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?** The verb *ya'ats* (יָצַע, "to counsel/advise") indicates Jeremiah's role as God's spokesman offering divine wisdom, not mere human opinion. Yet Zedekiah's track record showed repeated unwillingness to obey (*shama*, שָׁמַע) God's word through Jeremiah (37:2). This tragic pattern—seeking God's word while refusing to obey it—characterizes Zedekiah's entire reign and epitomizes religious hypocrisy.

## Historical Context

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This secret meeting occurred circa 587 BC during Babylon's siege of Jerusalem. Zedekiah, a weak puppet king installed by Nebuchadnezzar, was caught between pro-Egyptian court officials who wanted resistance and God's prophet who demanded surrender. Jeremiah had already been imprisoned twice for his unpopular message (37:15, 38:6).

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. Do you ever seek God's guidance while already resolved not to obey if it conflicts with your plans?
2. What makes Jeremiah willing to speak truth despite knowing it might cost him his life?
3. How does Zedekiah's pattern of seeking but not heeding God's word appear in modern religious practice?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיֹּאמֶר	יְרֵמְיָהּ הוּא	אֶל	צִדְקִיָּהוּ	כִּי	אֲנִי יֹדֵעַ	לְךָ	הֵל וְאֵל
said	Then Jeremiah	H413	unto Zedekiah	H3588	If I declare	H0	H3808
H559	H3414		H6667		H5046		
תְּמִיתָ נִי	תְּמִיתָ נִי				וְכִי		
it unto thee wilt thou not surely	it unto thee wilt thou not surely				H3588		
H4191	H4191						
אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם	לֹא	תִשְׁמַע	אֵלַי:				
and if I give thee counsel	H3808	wilt thou not hearken	H413				
H3289		H8085					