

Aim: Standing firm for what you believe**Refer:** The Great Controversy chapter 11

In 1455, 28 years before Martin Luther was born, Jacques Lefèvre was born in France. Lefèvre became a professor at the University of Paris and hoping to write a book on the history of the saints and martyr in the church. In the process of researching he started reading the Bible and found Jesus.

One of Lefèvre's students was William Farel; not unlike Paul of the New Testament, when he met Jesus he turned all his energy to spreading the Word. The Bishop of Meaux soon joined them and worked unceasingly to bring reform to the churches in his area; replacing corrupt priests with men who loved God. When Lefèvre translated the New Testament into French, the bishop spared no expense to have it printed and distributed to the people. Instead of meeting in the wine shops in the evenings the people met in homes to discuss the Bible truths, pray and praise God.

Even the sister of the king believed and for a time things went well, but then persecution started. Many were given the choice between burning to death at the stake or recanting – saying they were wrong. At this point the bishop of Meaux' faith failed and he recanted but despite this, the people in his churches stood firm in their new faith and many became martyrs.

Louis de Berquin was a knight of the king and like William Farel, a zealous supporter of the Pope until he found the truth for himself in the Bible. He was a man of much influence in the court and with the king and became a key person in the spread of the Reformation. Time after time he was charged with heresy and thrown in prison and time after time he was released by the king who couldn't make up his mind whether to support Rome or the Reformation. Then one day, someone vandalised a statue of the Virgin Mary; the king withdrew from Paris and the Monks took advantage of his absence to arrest Berquin, sentence him to death and execute him all in one day. As Berquin marched to the place of his death, the people of the city were amazed by his appearance – his rich cloths and the look of peace and joy on his face – as if he was in a temple.

During this time Lefèvre, Farel and many others left the city seeking safer places and at the same time, spreading the truth of the Gospel even further.

The army of Babylon actually conquered Judah twice. The first time was while Jehoiachin was the king.

Jeremiah 29 is a letter written to the people who had been taken captive.

Who was taken captive? Jeremiah 29:1-2 (This is when Daniel went to Babylon)

What was the message of the letter? Verse 4-7

Nebuchadnezzar appointed King Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah to be king and he left the remaining people in Jerusalem to live – all they had to do was pay a tax to Babylon. But Zedekiah decided to rebel; so nine years later the army of Babylon returned and laid siege to Jerusalem again.

The prophet Jeremiah lived during this time and received messages calling for the people to repent and warning them of the coming destruction. Jeremiah also received many messages in the form of object lessons.

One such message is given in Jeremiah 27:1-7, 12 (Submit to the yoke of Babylon)

One day Jeremiah was arrested, accused of trying to join the Babylonians and thrown in a dungeon. When the king wanted to speak to Jeremiah, he arranged for him to move to the palace courtyard where he remained a prisoner.

Read the story in Jeremiah 38:1-13 (Jeremiah in the cistern)

Jeremiah had told King Zedekiah many times what he must do to live but what did he do instead?

Jeremiah 39:4

Because he did not surrender and tried to flee instead, most of the city was burned and many people were killed; others were taken as prisoners and only the poorest were left in Judah.

What happened to Jeremiah? Jeremiah 39:11-14

Unfortunately, the rest of Jeremiah's days weren't peaceful – Gedaliah was appointed governor of the land but he was assassinated by a spy from Aram. There had some guerrilla fighters living in the hills, and Gedaliah had

told them they could live in peace but after Gedaliah was killed they were afraid and decided that the remaining people of Judah should move to Egypt.

What was Jeremiah's message? Jeremiah 42:9-17

They didn't listen – instead they took all of the people, including Jeremiah and moved them all to Egypt where most of them turned to idol worshipping and forgot God and never returned just as Jeremiah had predicted.

Discuss: how the people in France might have felt when they are told they must say that they don't believe the Bible any more or they would be killed.

How do you think the people who decided to recant or say they were wrong felt afterwards?

How do you think the people who were killed felt? Remember that as Berquin marched to his death they said he had a look of peace and joy on his face and last term we learnt that John Huss and Jerome both died singing to Jesus.

Discuss: how the people felt about Jeremiah's message

Discuss: how Jeremiah must have felt at times.

How could Jeremiah have the strength to stand alone when no one was listening to him? How were the martyrs able to die singing and happy?

We are very lucky in Australia at the moment; we have the freedom to believe as we want to and to worship as we want to. But there are places in the world right now where Christians don't have that freedom. Do we need to worry that that might happen to us?

- Philippians 4:6-7 – God tells us not to worry.
 - Matthew 10:19-20 – God will give you the right words
 - Matthew 10:23 – When you are persecuted, flee to another town
 - 1 Peter 4:12-13 – Do not be surprised
 - Matthew 10:28 – Don't be afraid of those who kill the body
 - Revelation 2:10 – Be faithful unto death
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The book Great Stories for Kids volume 3 (©1999, Jerry D. Thomas, Pacific Press Publishing Association) Thomas has some good points to help you make good choices even when your friends don't.

1. **Ask questions** – don't go anywhere or do anything until you know why or what the plan is.
2. **Name the trouble** – say what is wrong with what they are planning.
3. **Name the consequences** – how much trouble will you all be in?
4. **Suggest something else**
5. **Move it. Sell it. Leave the door open.** – Invite them along and then, whether or not they come, go and do what you suggested.