

“God’s Fire and Hammer!”

Jeremiah 23:25-32

Intro. – Remember this famous picture? It’s known as “The Smack Heard Around the World.”... Along that vein, in July of 1992, New Orleans, LS was alerted to a scam that had been taking place for months. During this time, New Orleans had been entertained by a curbside performance of a couple of kissers. Cheryl Collins and Donald Simmons were the ones who seemed to love to *smooch* in public. Cheryl (38) and Donald (53) could not walk mid-city streets for more than a few feet without pausing to embrace and kiss passionately. They became known as “The Kissers of New Orleans.” Police, however, had their suspicions. They marked some money and set up surveillance through which they discovered while everyone was watching this kissing couple, Donald was emptying the parking meters. Those kissers cost the city of New Orleans thousands of dollars.

Let me use this to introduce our text. Jeremiah was called by God to expose false prophets, as well as, urge God’s people to be far more discerning of truth and falsehood. Like Cheryl Collins and Donald Simmons, there were those in Jeremiah’s time who gave the appearance of *truth* but were in fact *masters of deception*. But more was at stake than thousands of dollars. Those who were pretending to be God’s spokesmen were affecting the eternal destiny of souls. Now, how does this apply to you? Should you concern yourself with such an issue? Are there really those who knowingly promote that which is false and do so in the name of the Lord? How can you discern between *truth* and *error*?

These are the questions we will seek to answer through this morning’s text. God gave a test through Jeremiah to discern truth/error. That same test remains today. Our text refers to it as God’s *fire* and *hammer*.

Purpose: to better understand how God’s Word is our source for discerning truth and falsehood

As straw compared to grain, so is error compared to God’s Word

I GOD’S WORD IS LIKE FIRE

A. It Warms

1. In about three months you will better appreciate this point:
 - Illus. – for eight years, heated the parsonage in Bloomington, IN with wood. Cutting, splitting, ricking... Hard but satisfying work... Real joy came from the warmth of wood heat...
2. With the burdens of life to fight and battle, where do you get assurance/comfort?
 - a. is it in empty promises politicians are notorious for giving?
 - b. is it in the accumulation of MORE things?
 - c. is it in the hedonistic philosophy of life?
3. Your comfort/assurance comes from the warmth of the Glorious Gospel of God’s grace:
 - a. such lifts you from discouragement while reassuring you it’s worthwhile to press ahead...
 - b. in view of the great love and promises of God as revealed in Scripture... you can understand how the Word of God and the presence of His Spirit in your life is life fire!
4. When the Word is faithfully presented and honestly received it: restores, reassures, reminds, recreates, reestablishes, refutes, reinforces, rejuvenates, revives, replenishes, renews, reshapes, resolves, repairs, renovates, revitalizes, regenerates, refreshes, restarts, refurbishes, repeats, repletes, resets, resists, resonates, resolves, responds, resurrects, retrieves, revamps, rearms, rearranges, rebuts, and rescues!

B. It Awakens

1. Put your finger close to fire and it will pain you – even so and more so with *truth of the Gospel!*
2. Men/women/young people don’t like being scorched and burned by the Gospel:
 - a. don’t like being *exposed* and made to face reality of the real them...
 - b. as you’re not thrilled with something that burns you... Gospel is at its best when it excites and brings forth reaction from you...
3. Those who remain unconverted... you are the ones who are satisfied or content with your life; yet, you are the very ones who need to let the Gospel awaken your lethargic ways...
4. Note: you will not remain asleep if you’re on fire... let the Gospel of Grace echo in your heart!

C. It Melts

1. Many here can testify as to when their heart was cold, unyielding and unrighteous.
2. Under the influence of God's truth (Word and His Spirit) you begin to tremble, to be distressed; so, you seek God and trust in Him. His Spirit enters your life at baptism and you are empowered...
3. Oh, that hearts of hardened lives would come in contact with this blessed flame, that its holy heat would melt these hearts and that these hearts would yield to the authority and love of God alone!
4. Eternal truth brought to bear upon men/women/young people is the only matter that will separate the dross from the pure gold. Great heat is needed to accomplish this process.
 - Illus. – When the late King George visiting a pottery plant, two special vases were shown to him. Both were made of same material and both had been painted in the same style but one was beautiful and the other unsightly. The reason? One had taken the fire, the other had not!

Have you taken the fire? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Let the Word melt your stubborn heart!

II GOD'S WORD IS LIKE A HAMMER

A. It Requires No Great Skill

1. Not minimizing skill of a craftsman, but a hammer is a tool that doesn't require technical skill.
2. Like a hammer, be confident in Word, strike with it and let it do its job!...
3. Isaiah 55:11 *"So shall My Word be which goes forth from My mouth. It shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."*
4. Certainly not suggesting you slack in study and application... BUT am saying let Word do its job!

B. It Will Break Rocky Hearts

1. Many songs dealing with the heart: "I Left My Heart..." "Achy, Breaky Heart"
2. Chevy trucks may be "Like a Rock" but nothing breaks hard hearts like God's Word...!
3. Only the Word of God can break through the rocky hearts sin has created in each of our lives...

C. It Must Be Used Persistently

1. Ever work on something that took every ounce of your persistence? Must persist in His Word!
2. Illus. – Survey made by National Retail Dry Goods Assoc. revealed following: 48% salesmen make one call quit; 25% made two calls and quit; 15 % make three calls and quit = 88% salesmen quit after making one, two or three new calls. But 12% keeping on calling do 80% of the business. 88% who quit after one, two or three calls do only 20% of the business.
3. You and I must persist with the Gospel message in order for it to do its job.

Put the 2 together (fire/hammer) and you see how God prepares you to be His instrument. He puts you in the fire of His Word: melts you, softens you and subdues you. He then removes you from the fire and molds you further with hammer strokes only He can give.

III GOD'S WORD PUT TO TEST

A. Try the Word on Yourself

1. Discouraged, down trodden, defeated? – turn to the Word seeking God's blessing and you will find fire to warm and comfort...
2. Nature of God's word is such that those who feed on it will be changed, those who don't won't!
3. Warning: this book is habit forming. Regular use causes loss of anxiety, decreased appetite for lying, cheating, stealing, and hating. Symptoms: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...

B. Try the Word On Others

1. It is estimated that 95% of all who call themselves "church members" have never led anyone to X!
2. Why? God's fire/hammer has not been utilized – too many take on too much responsibility (as if convicting of sin and the remedy for being lost is dependent upon *how you tell it*).
3. Let God's Word do its work! Nothing changes family/friends/neighbors like God's fire/hammer!

4. Hebrews 4:12 *“For the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*
5. Illus. – ask Wm Hone. One day this infidel saw young boy reading Bible. Hone said, “Why do you spend your time with a worthless book like that?” The boy replied, “It is the only thing that gives my sick mother any comfort.” Hone was so moved by the young man’s response, he decided to read the Bible for himself. As he read, God’s fire and hammer went to work. Years later Hone wrote the following:

The proudest heart that ever beat
Hath been subdued in me;
The wildest will that ever rose,
To scorn Thy cause or aid Thy foes,
Is quelled, my God, by Thee.

Conclusion: In response to questions we began. Yes, the issue of TRUTH and FALSEHOOD is real. Yes, there are those who knowingly promote that which is false and yes, there is ONE WAY we can discern between good and evil, truth and error, right and wrong.

I read several years ago of a missionary family who had returned to the states to give a report to their supporting church. The missionary, along with several others were entering a communist country. At the border the guards asked the following: “Do you have any guns, drugs, or Bibles?”

When I read this, I immediately thought “quite a combination.” Doesn’t it strike you odd that Bibles would be included in a list of articles perceived as threatening? Why was the Bible perceived as a threat? The Bible then, as the Bible now exposes and destroys all that is false.

I pray that you see the Bible as more than a threat to atheism. The Bible has survived the ignorance of its friends and the hatred of its enemies. Is there any doubt that the Bible is God’s fire and hammer?!