

Casting The Word into the Fire (Jeremiah 36:1-24)

Introduction:

- I. By the providence of God, we can hold God's divine word in our hands. By the sacrifice of many, we have ready access to the Word of life which can rescue us from sin and save our souls. The value of God being willing to preserve for us His divine counsel in book form cannot be truly estimated. God sent the Holy Spirit to inspired men with His Word, who in turn revealed God's will in written form. As a result of this we can consult the literal Word of God almost whenever we want to.

- II. Since the Bible is the Word of God, we must avoid tampering with it at all cost. Now, there are two ways in which one might tamper with the Word of God. First, one might add to it. Listen to me: all of the false and unauthorized practices found in the religious world today come as a result of people adding to the Word of God.

Second, the Word of God can be tampered with by taken away from it. This is done when people don't like what they read in the Word of God. Instead of conforming to the precepts of God and altering their life, belief and religious practices to be in harmony with the Bible, they simply ignore God's Word, figuratively "cutting out" the portions of the Book that they don't like. I want to talk to you for a while about "Casting the Word of God into the Fire."

Lesson:

Open your Bibles to Jeremiah 36 and we want to take a few minutes to read from that text at this time (**Jer. 36:1-7, 10, 20-25**). What do we have here? We have an attempt at destroying the Word of God simply because the king and his officials did not like the message. We have a blatant attempt at tampering with God's Word by taking away it. Let's look at some ways that people are doing this, at least figuratively, today.

I. **Some Try to Take God's Marriage Law Out of the Bible.**

Let's begin by looking at the law.

Matt 19:9

9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

Mark 10:11

11 And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her,

Luke 16:18

18 "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Now there are those who are not satisfied with what the Bible teaches on this subject. They don't like the idea of marriage being "until death do us part." They don't like that idea that once a person is scripturally married, that he or she can't divorce and remarry unless an unfaithful spouse is put away for fornication. They don't like the idea that the guilty party cannot remarry. So what do they do? In effect they do the same thing that Jehoiakim did. They cut out the portion of the Bible that they don't like and cast it into the fire.

A preacher by the name of Stephan Gola wrote a book called, "Divorce: God's Will? I want you to notice what he has to say about the subject of divorce. In introducing his book, we read the following:

"God Himself is fed-up with His church condemning those who have had a divorce and married again, and those who may need a divorce and will remarry! Looking for the TRUTH concerning a Christian marriage, divorce and being married again as taught in the Bible? It's in the book *Divorce: God's Will?*"

Now here is a what you will get out of this book according to Stephan Gola.

- You NO LONGER have to wonder if the decision to divorce is right or wrong—you will have the Knowledge of the Truth and the Holy Spirit Himself will guide you.
- You NO LONGER have to struggle with the condemnation of guilt from a divorce or being married again. Divorce was never a sin in itself—ever!

Establishing that Divorce is sinful

- 1. IT PUTS ASUNDER WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER: Mt. 19:1-9**
- 2. IT CAUSES ADULTERY: Mt. 5:31-32**
- 3. IT BREAKS ONE'S WEDDING VOWS: Jas. 5:12; Ecc. 5:4-5**
- 4. IT IS CONTRARY TO GOD'S WILL: Mt. 7:21**
- 5. IT IS DOING WHAT GOD HATES: Mal. 2:15-16a; Heb. 1:9**

Stephan Gola is by no means alone in his view of divorce and remarriage. Many, and perhaps even most, denominations have backed away from the hard sayings of Jesus and accepted a softer, man-made doctrine that is more tolerable in society. However even some conservative preachers have followed this course. They don't like what the bible says so they cut it up and cast what they don't like into the fire. Ladies and gentlemen, that won't do if you want to go to heaven. Don't tamper with the Word of God. If you are married, stay married. If you are divorced, be reconciled with your spouse. If reconciliation is impossible, remain unmarried. Live by the Word of God. Don't cast it into the fire just because you don't like what it says.

II. Some Try to Take the Sin of Homosexuality Out of the Bible.

Is homosexuality a sin? The Bible says yes, and since the Bible is God's divine Word, God says yes. It doesn't matter what a liberal society says. It doesn't matter what is politically correct. Homosexuality is portrayed in the bible as being an abomination to God, contrary to nature and a sinful practice.

Lev 18:22

22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Lev 20:13

13 If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

Rom 1:26-27

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

1 Cor 6:9-10

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

These passages are clear, aren't they? But there are some in society that don't like them and yet they want to continue to believe in the Bible. How can they do that? Simple! Just cut those passages out of the Bible and cast them into the fire. There are many who are doing that today, at least figuratively speaking.

Now it upsets me that there are many people who don't believe in God or who don't believe in the inspiration of the Bible who are in favor of homosexuality, but I can at least understand it. What is inexcusable is for those who profess to be Christians and bible believers accepting this sin.

"It may come as a surprise to Christians in some parts of the world, but the idea of being a Christian and an active homosexual is defended by many Christians, especially in the United States and Europe. Their understanding is that there is no Biblical condemnation for a "monogamous" and lasting homosexual relationship within the context of love and whose counterpart would be heterosexual marriage" (Esly Regina Carvalho).

Now someone might ask, "How can they say that there is no Biblical condemnation for homosexual relationships in the bible? I'll tell you how. They just ignore passages that they don't like and that condemn their practice. That is what people are doing all over the world on this issue. Another example of a group which falls into this category is the Metropolitan Community Church. Is here one advertisement of a local church in Indiana.

Welcome!

Jesus Metropolitan Community Church is a Christian Church, founded by Gays and Lesbians, for all people. We exist to follow the teachings of Jesus by making disciples, working for justice, and helping those in need. We have a special ministry of welcoming and affirming gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people.

"The Presbyterian Church (USA) voted June 20th to allow local and regional bodies to ordain gays to church's ministries. After nearly 3 hours of debate, delegates voted 288 to 221 to approve..." (Christianity Today, 2006)

Do you think they ever read Romans one at that church? Do you think they ever study 1 Cor. 6? Not likely. No they ignore those passages as if they weren't in the Bible. They cut them out and cast them into the fire because that is the only way that can maintain their lifestyle and still profess to be Christians. But I am saying to you in this lesson that is not the way to handle the Word of God.

III. Some Try to Take Works Out of the Bible.

Let's begin again by noticing many passages that demand works as a part of salvation:

Matt 7:21

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Acts 2:40

40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

Phil 2:12

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

Heb 5:8-9

8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. 9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

All of these passages condemn the false teaching of "faith only," but there is no greater proof than Jas 2. Let's read that passage and you will find that the only way you could deal with the inspired teaching of James and still believe in faith only would be to cut it out of the Bible and that is exactly what some have tried to do. For example, Martin Luther believed that only those books that taught his Dogma of Justification by Faith Alone should be accepted as part of the canon. In other words, he denied the inspiration of the book of James because it didn't go along with the "faith only" theory. Listen to what he said:

"But this James does nothing more than drive to the Law and to its works. Besides, he throws things together so chaotically that it seems to me he must have been some good, pious man, who took a few sayings from the disciples of the Apostles and thus tossed them off on paper...In a word he wanted to guard against those who relied on faith without works, but was unequal to the task" (Luther's works. Volume 35 Word and Sacrament I, pages 395-397 ed. E.T. Buchman [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960.]).

This was Luther's way of denying the inspiration of the book of James. To substantiate his disposition towards this portion of the Bible, listen to a selection taken from his writings:

"Firstly, because in direct opposition to St. Paul and all the rest of the bible, it ascribes justification to works, and declares that Abraham was justified by his works when he offered up his son. St. Paul, on the contrary, in Romans 4:3, teaches that Abraham was justified without works, by his faith alone..." (Martin Luther, "Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings" Dillenberger, page 35).

What has Luther done. He didn't like what the Bible says in James so he cut it off and cast it into the fire. Let me tell you something. Martin Luther was a great man in a lot of ways. He had the courage to make a stand against the Roman Catholic church and he was indeed the father of the reformation moment of the 16th century. There is no doubt that I could say a lot more good things than bad things about the man Martin Luther. But pay attention to me: when it comes to our treatment of the sacred text, we are not on a point system. We don't get a free pass when we tamper with the Word of God just because we have done some good things in life. Martin Luther, ladies and gentlemen, tampered with the word of God. He took away, not just the book of James literally, but all of the sacred passages that teach us to work out our own salvation. He was just as guilty as Jehoiachim and his servants, was he not? And may I say to you that every preacher, teacher and student of the Word of God that denies the essentiality of works of faith, is guilty of doing exactly what the king did in the days of Jeremiah. They are cutting out pages from the Word of God and casting it into the fire.

Don't be guilty of doing what Luther did. Don't be guilty of doing what many denominational preachers are doing today. Don't tamper with the Word of God. The bible says work out your own salvation. Just do it. Don't believe that you can earn your way to heaven because you can't. You are too much of a sinner to do that and so I'm I. But at the same time don't deny that God requires you to do something in order to be saved. Find out what He requires and don't ignore it, but do it.

IV. Some Try to Take Baptism Out of the Bible.

What does the Bible say about baptism? Let's hear the Word of God.

Acts 2:38

38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16

16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

Rom 6:3

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Gal 3:27

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Col 2:12

12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

1 Peter 3:21

21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Now these are just a few of the passages that reveal baptism as being essential to our salvation. But there are not a few in the religious world today, who, by their teaching, have cut these passages out of the Word of God and cast it into the fire. Listen to these men:

Billy Graham

"No responsible Baptist would claim that baptism is necessary for salvation."
(Compare w/ the words of Christ)

Mark 16:16

He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.

I know that Billy Graham is a beloved figure in this society. I read the other day where he is called "America's evangelist." But the truth is, what he does to the subject of baptism is no better than what Jehoiakim did with the roll of God back in the days of Jeremiah. In order to be consistent, Billy Graham must cut Mark 16:16 out of the Bible and cast it into the fire. And the truth is that is what he and many of his colleagues do, not literally, but figuratively by discounting, dismissing and disregarding plain teachings in the Word of God.

A. T. Robertson, a renowned Greek scholar, in trying to explain away the force of Acts 2:38 which we previously viewed, states the following:

*"not only does eis (the Greek word for "for"-Emphasis mine, dw) signify "aim or purpose" (in order to) as in 1 Corinthians 2:7, it can just as well mean "on the basis or ground of (with reference to), Matthew 10:41; 12:41. "One will decide the use here (Acts 2:38) according as he believes that baptism is essential to the remission of sins or not. My view is decidedly against the idea that Peter, Paul, or any one in the New Testament taught baptism as essential to the remission of sins..." (**Word Pictures of the New Testament**, pp. 35-36).*

With one sentence A.T. Robertson cast the significance of Acts 2:38 into the fire, changing the entire of the verse. Why did he do it? He did it

because, like most Baptist preachers, he let his theology get in the way of his scholarship. How do I know that? Compare Acts 2:38 with Matthew 26:28.

Acts 2:38

*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins...***

Matt 26:28

*For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many **for the remission of sins.***

Now listen to what A.T. Robertson says about Matt. 26:28:

"...unto the remission...the purpose of the shedding of his blood of the New Covenant was precisely to remove (forgive) sins" (Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. 1, pp. 209, 210).

This proves that A.T. knows better than to deny the real import of the word "for" in Acts 2:38 but his religious background demands that he ignore it.

Ladies and gentlemen, baptism is for the remission of sin. Jesus commanded it. Peter commanded it. Paul commanded it. Don't cast the Word of God into the fire. Do what it says to do and your sins will be remitted.

Conclusion:

How do you handle the Word of God? If you tamper with it by adding to it or taking away from it, your soul is at risk (**Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 4:2**). Listen: the Word of God is perfect; thus, it doesn't need any tampering. Don't add to it like many people do. But also, don't take any from it, as many do as well. Just obey it.