

# His Word Is Fire

A Mother's Day Message

Jeremiah 23:28-29



**Rock Hill Baptist Church**  
**605 Rock Hill Road**  
**Lexington, Tennessee 38351**

**Pastor David Buffaloe**  
**731-845-6104**  
**online at [bibleteacher.org](http://bibleteacher.org)**

**FOCAL Read Responsively** Jeremiah 23:28-29 ...

What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. {29} **Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?**

The Prophet Jeremiah lived in an age where God's Israel had departed from the Word of God in favor of the word of man. It was a time when people “**called evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**” (Isaiah 5:20). God's Word was being preached in a time when the Word of God was no longer being considered. Whenever Jeremiah preached that precious Word others who were false prophets stood against him, saying “**Thus saith the Lord**”. God's nation had become a people who would not “**endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; They turned away their ears from the truth, and turned instead to fables**” (2 Timothy 4:3-4), all for the sake of “**peace, peace when there is no peace**” (Jeremiah 8:11). The false prophets consoled the rebellious by watering down the Word of God. Jeremiah, man of God that he was, was nonetheless discouraged. Israel had fallen, the nation God so loved had fallen; how shall they be restored if they will not hear? Then the Lord spoke unto the Prophet's heart:

“**What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the LORD**”? I have a remnant, I have a people that are Mine. “**I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to**

## the election of grace (Romans 11:3-5).

God always has a remnant, always has a people, and God is calling His people to stand for Him no matter what the spirit of this age may say. **What is the chaff to the wheat?**

The chaff, the unbeliever and the unbelieving prophets shall be blown away in the wind of God's Word. The Lord told Jeremiah, just as He has always told His people that **the solution to our problems is not in our hands, but in His hand. His Word is like fire and hammer** changing whatever it touches.

Politicians cannot save this country, nor can it restore us to where we once were. Socialism told the Russian people that the solution to the problems of their day was a redistribution of wealth. People like Marx and Stalin thought that the hammer and sickle could replace the Hammer and Fire of God's Word. For seventy five years Russia toiled under the agony of a dictatorial government, standing in long lines to get no more than a meager ration of bread. When Russia God's Church stood, for **“What is the chaff to the wheat?”** There is no power but that of God!

What is the solution to our problems? How do we as a nation solve our out of control prison population? Do we need better programs? How do we deal with the terrors and murders that grip our country? How can we hope to recover from where we have fallen? There is but one hope, and that is that God's Church – His remnant – **get**

**back to the Bible.** I remember W.A. Criswell saying one time that a fellow pastor from another denomination commended him on the faithfulness of his people. When he asked his friend what he meant that fellow said **“Why, I see every Sunday all of your people carrying their prayer books to Church”**. Criswell told him **“Dear friend, that is not their prayer books but their Bibles they are carrying”!** There was a time when Baptists were called “People of the Book”, for every Baptist carried his Bible – read it – and *applied* it to their lives.

My first experience with the Bible was not in Church but at my mother's knee. I remember she had a children's Bible filled with stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, Daniel in the Lion's Den, Ruth and Boaz. Momma used to read this Book to me and my brother before we fell asleep at night. Though I was not saved until the age of 17, the groundwork that momma laid by teaching us the Word of God contributed to that salvation. We are finding in the Church today children who do not know who Abraham was, who have never heard of the Noachic flood, and do not know the significance of Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden.

Many young people today do not understand the difference between right and wrong, and often base their interpretation of truth on “what feels right for me”. They live in the moment and for the moment, not for eternity. You see the effects of their hearts in the condition of our nation.

Dear friends, we must get back to the Bible. We must turn back to His Word, telling our loved ones what it says. It is God's Word, not man's word – and it has power to transform lives for the glory of God.

## **1. God's Word Is A Comforting Fire**

**FOCAL** Jeremiah 23:29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD ...

Jeremiah believed that his ministry was hopeless. We have all been in that place at one time or the other in our lives where we have felt that we were in hopeless or helpless situations. I believe, if I were to question most of you in this audience, many would tell me that you are unsatisfied with something in your life. Perhaps the doctor has given you a bad diagnosis, and you fear what is coming. Perhaps you have a loved one on the verge of death. Perhaps you have been dissatisfied with your own life for one reason or another. Regardless as to your state of mind, **God's Word is like a fire.** God's Word comforts our hearts like a fire on a cold wintry day. The life lived through the Word of God cannot be discouraged nor defeated.

**Momma and the account of JOSEPH** I am sure you are all aware of a Bible story my momma used to read me about **Joseph and the coat of many colors (Genesis 37:3ff).** Joseph's Daddy, Israel, loved him more than all his other children, so he made Joseph a coat of many colors. God loved Joseph too, and often spoke to him. Joseph's brothers, in a fit of jealous rage, threw their brother in a pit, then sold him to a passing caravan as a

slave. They took his little colored coat and, marring it with animal blood, told their daddy that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Joseph would go to Egypt and, because he loved the Word of God and heeded the Lord, would be promoted to a position second only to Pharaoh. Years later Joseph would tell his brothers:

**Genesis 50:20-21** But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. {21} Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them.

Joseph was able to speak comforting to His brothers because of the Word of God hidden in his heart. Given a choice between storing up bitterness at betrayal or focusing on God's Word this dear saint focused on God's Word. As Joseph reached the ripe old age of 110 he knew he was going to die. Focusing on God's Word – and not on his upcoming death, we read:

**Genesis 50:24-25** And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. {25} And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

**Joseph hid God's Word in his heart (Psalm 119:11) so that he would not sin against God.**

Whether Joseph was in a pit, a jail, a pagan country, or near to death, he had the Light of God's Word to show him the way.

God's Word is sure. He promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the land of Canaan, and God is faithful in what He promised. For that reason Joseph made Israel promise that they would **carry his bones from Egypt to the promised Land**, a promise that Moses and the children of Israel kept many years later (**Hebrews 11:22**). God's Word is a **warming Word, a comforting Fire**.

## 2. God's Word Is A Convicting Fire

**FOCAL** Jeremiah 23:29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD ...

Fire does not only comfort, it is *uncomfortable*. A person cannot long ignore a fire at the fingertips!

God told Jeremiah **what is the chaff to the wheat?** The fire that cooks the wheat, making it into edible bread, is the same fire that burns up the chaff.

**ILLUSTRATE** The great Southern Baptist preacher Dr. R.G. Lee once preached a sermon against sin. He didn't pull any punches, but preached as hard as God gave him liberty to preach. At the end of the sermon a lady – terribly offended by the sermon – came up to Dr. Lee and said “I didn't appreciate that sermon one little bit”. Dr. Lee replied, “The devil didn't either. So

classify yourself.”<sup>1</sup>

Fire, when applied to a substance, *classifies or tempers* that which it hits.

When fire is applied to chaff it quickly burns it up. When fire is applied to wheat it roasts it, turning it into something delicious and edible. Someone may say “**I love the Lord**” but the fire of God's Word tries your love. For instance we read in Scripture:

**1 John 4:20** If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Love and hate cannot dwell in the same well. Just as Joseph had to forgive his brothers to be used of God – and do good toward his brothers – even so we who are His must do good to all, else we are not who we proclaim to be. You may claim to be a Christian or even a Preacher of the Word but the **fire that is His Word** classifies you. How do you stand? The Bible says:

**1 John 2:3-6** And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. {4} He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. {5} But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in

<sup>1</sup> Illustration from Dr. Adrian Rogers book *The Secret of Supernatural Living*, Nelson Publishers, pg 54

**him. {6} He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.**

Those who belong to the Lord **love the Word of God**, and they **keep that Word**. Do Christians keep the Word perfectly? No, not at all.

Christians sin, but never take sin lightly. Christians fail God at times, but are continually drawn back to God by the Spirit Who indwells them.

**ILLUSTRATE the Roundabout** Dear friends, you *must classify yourself*. I remember living in England with my dear wife and children for some three years. I had to learn how to drive on the left side of the road while I was there, and had to learn how to get from one point to another using the British map. There was one strange thing on the British highways called a “roundabout”, the British replacement for a stop light. You entered the roundabout and, traveling in a counter clockwise direction, you took whatever exit you wanted to go where you needed to go. I remember circling in roundabouts 10 times or more, yelling at my dear wife “which exit do we take?”. A map is no good unless you know first of all *where you are* and, secondly, *where you are going*.

**ILLUSTRATE Vanderbilt Hospital** A little closer to home, last week I was at Vanderbilt Hospital checking on one of our sick folks. As I stood near the ground floor elevator I noticed something odd: The sign had a “You Are Here” marker on the floor I was on, as well as on the

ninth floor. I thought at first I had lost my mind! Obviously it was a mistake on the part of whoever made the sign, but it illustrates the point: You need to know where you are before you can get where you're going.

**The Word of God, like a fire, classifies your life by telling you where you are and by showing you where you are going.** The Word establishes *where you are*.

Are you truly saved? Then you will want to keep His commandments. You will not sin and grin, grin and sin, but your heart will be burdened when you fail God. If you can **tell a lie – a violation of God's ninth commandment – and not feel deep remorse and a desire to confess this lie as sin to God** then you *are not where you think you are*. If you can **hate your brother, and spread division and derision about him rather than lovingly correct him**, then you *are not where you think you are*. Jesus told the Pharisees – men who had memorized the Bible -

**John 8:43-47 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. {44} Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. {45} And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. {46} Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? {47} He that is of God heareth**

**God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.**

God's people **hear God's Words**. His **Word is as a fire** destroying the chaff but blessing the wheat. You who are wheat became wheat because you heard His Word. His **Word, like fire, melted your hard hearts**. You thought yourselves to be good until that Word came to you and indicted you, and you knew that you **had to call upon the Name of the Lord and be saved**. The heat of the Word convicted you that you were a sinner, lost and undone. You were a liar, a thief, a blasphemer, a murderer. You stopped saying "I'm not so bad" and, under the conviction of God cried out "**What must I do to be saved?**". You heard that Jesus Christ gave Himself for you, and heard:

**Acts 4:12** Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

For God has decreed that:

**Philippians 2:10-11** That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; {11} And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**ILLUSTRATE momma & the account of Enoch** I remember momma reading the Bible story of a man simply known as **Enoch**. **Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him (Genesis 5:24)**. Enoch

went to be with the Lord and he *never died*, but was **translated that he should not see death (Hebrews 11:5)**, because **God translated him**. I also remember momma telling me the story of **Elijah**, that great Prophet, who **went up by a whirlwind to Heaven (2 Kings 2:11)**. Neither of these men saw death, but God took them because they trusted in His Word. God has promised each and every person who believes in Jesus:

**John 11:25-26 ... I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: {26} And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?**

If you have been convicted – burned – by the Word of God, then I beg you to give yourselves to Him. Like Enoch, **walk with God until you are not**. Like Elijah, **cast your life into His chariot of Fire, that Word of God**. He alone is the resurrection and the life. **Whoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die**.

### **3. God's Word Alone Changes Things**

**FOCAL** Jeremiah 23:29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

God's Word changes things. His Word, like **fire and like a hammer**, changes that which it touches. But you must be willing to submit to the authority of that Word.

**ILLUSTRATE momma and the Centurion** I remember momma reading me the account of the Centurion and Jesus. A **Centurion**, a high ranking commander in the Roman army, sent a request to Jesus (**Luke 7:1-10**). He had a fellow soldier, a person under his command, that was sick and about to die. He asked that Jesus heal this man. Jesus headed toward the Centurion's house but this man, believing in the Lord, said **“You don't have to come, Lord. Just speak the word and my friend will be healed. I, too am a man under authority. I say to one soldier “Go here” and he goes, and to another “Come here” and he comes. Just say the Word and my friend will be healed”**. The Bible says:

**Luke 7:9** When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Though the Centurion never met Jesus – he believed, and was rewarded for believing in God's Word. If you are saved you *must submit yourself to the authority of God's Word*. **Dr. Adrian Rogers** said:

**“We have authority when we are under authority. We forfeit authority when we refuse to submit to the authority that God has set over us. We cannot be over unless we are willing to be under.”<sup>2</sup>**

It is a great comfort to know that God's Word changes things. It is the Word that changes, consumes, and

convicts. It is the Word that **breaketh the rock in pieces**. We do not need a better Word from God – we have His Word. If you are reading a King James text you'll notice that the name of God, **the LORD**, is in all capital letters. This means that this is the holiest and most eternal Name of God **YAHWEH or JEHOVAH**. This is YAHWEH's Word, a hammer that will shatter the hardest heart. **Hammers are made for striking, not for beauty** – and though His Word is beautiful it is not merely ornamental. Mothers, read the Word to your children. Their little hearts will melt under the fire of that Word. Fathers, share the Word with your sons. Do not worry if you have little education: it is not the *type* of handle that makes the difference, whether it be mahogany or pine, but it is the hammer that makes the difference. Hammer away with the Word and it will make the difference. Parents and grandparents, have your children wandered from God? If so, do not fret, but share the Word of God with them. It is both fire and hammer. It can soften the hardest heart, and shape it into the image of Christ.

Have you yourselves become remote to God? Does He seem so very far away? The problem is not God, but the problem is with you, dear friend. There was a time when you read and studied His Word applying **fire and hammer to your soul**.

**God wishes above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 1:2), but this will not happen until you consistently walk in His truth.**

It is God's Word that created all that you see.

**Psalms 33:4-9 For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth. {5} He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. {6} By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. {7} He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. {8} Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. {9} For he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.**

It is God's Word in *my heart* that makes the difference. It is God's Word *lived* that changes lives for the better. You must live *your* life in His truth if you expect to be blessed. The Apostle said to the Thessalonian Church:

**1 Thessalonians 2:13 ... when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.**

The Word of God **effectually worketh in those who believe** but only when it is **received as the Word of God and not as the Word of man.**

Man's word is but fluff, paper pellets shot out of straws at the monsters around us. God's Word, in contrast, framed the Heavens and the earth, and

brought light out of darkness.

His Word can take your dark life and recreate it, turning you into the **new creature, where old things are passed away, and all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).**

My momma wasn't perfect, nor did she pretend to be perfect, but she knew God's Word was perfect. Thank you, momma, for loving me, and sharing His Word with me. Thank you, every momma, who shares this Word of truth with their children. Thank you, every believer, who takes the Word to heart, and shares that Word with others. His Word, **fire and hammer**, will be the tool by which we change the world.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

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Lexington, TN 38351

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

