Where Is Religion Headed?

(by Victor White)

In the book of **Jeremiah**, we find the prophet being commanded by the Lord in **36:2-3** to write down the words that God had spoken to him in a book that through the reading of those words the people might turn from their evil ways. Jeremiah did exactly what the Lord commanded him. This book, with its condemnation of Israel and Judah, eventually ended up being read in the presence of king Jehoiakim. After just a few pages had been read, the king became so infuriated that he cut the book into pieces with a penknife and threw the pages into the fire. This account is found in **Jeremiah 36:20-24**. The concluding verse of that passage notes of the king and his court, ***“Yet they were not afraid nor rent their garments.”*** Certainly a sad state of affairs when the leaders of the people so violently reject the Word of God that they become enraged at its reading and seek to destroy it.

Many today are concerned that our leaders have rejected God’s Word in a similar fashion. No, we do not see them cutting up the Scriptures and casting them into the fire, but rather we see in the laws they enact and the lifestyles they embrace actions that speak just as loudly regarding their attitude toward the Word of God as those of king Jehoiakim. Because of this apparent forsaking of the precepts of God by many of our leaders, some have come to fear for the future of the church and our freedom to worship and teach the truth as we do now. Well that very concern should cause each of us to strengthen our faith in the Lord and, as many before us have done, serve the Lord our God regardless of the consequences that may come our way.

Consider what occurred following king Jehoiakim’s book burning. In **Jeremiah 36:32**, we see that Jeremiah took another book, wrote all the words the Lord had spoken to him, and added many more besides those. The king’s rejection of the word did not stop its proclamation. The powerful may reject it, those in authority may oppose it, but the Word of God continues to work for good in the lives of men.

Many years after the life of the prophet Jeremiah, we find the account of the Apostle Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost in **Acts 2**. Following the crowds plea of ***“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*** we find Peter answering that question in **v. 38**. The results are seen in **v. 41**, ***“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”*** The Word of God cannot be thwarted by a king’s knife. They cannot be burned by any leader of man, legislated away by any government, or declared archaic by changes in societal norms. Those have all occurred before but the Word of the Lord continues to be proclaimed and accepted by good and honest hearts.

So where is religion headed? That depends on us. Just as Jeremiah and the prophets suffered rejection, often punishment for the preaching of the word, we should be prepared for the same treatment. Just as Jesus demonstrated in speaking the words of the Father regardless of the consequences, we must follow that same example. Just as Peter overcame the ridicule of the crowd on Pentecost to proclaim the good news that saves men’s souls, we must have that same courage knowing that our efforts to teach and live by God’s Word will ultimately lead to an eternal home with God, not only for us but also for those who hear us. Religion, as it has been described in the Bible, is all about the people. The greatest obstacle to where religion is heading in our time is the same as it has been in the past. The people must know God’s Word. Many today ***“have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge”*** (**Romans 10:2**). Many ***“know God, but glorify Him not as God”*** (**Romans 1:21**). Some are **“tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine”** (**Ephesians 4:14**). People have been this way in the past and these problems still exist today. How have these difficulties been overcome in the past? By the Word of God being ***“heard among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”*** (**2 Timothy 2:2**). By heeding the exhortation to ***“study to show thyself approved unto God”*** (**1 Timothy 2:15**). By ***“desiring that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”*** (**Colossians 1:9**). That is the future of religion just as it has been since the days of Jeremiah. Where is religion headed? It all depends on you.

If The Devil’s In The Way

(by Jason Cheney)

I confess I have wondered if we should be teaching our children songs about tricking the devil into sitting on tacks or using him as a speed bump. But if (or more accurately when) the devil’s in the way, and he leaves us no option but going “through,” we must.

If he is making our way difficult, it must be because we have come too close to a treasure he cannot let us win. His work is to lead us in the other direction ([**2 Corinthians 11:3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Corinthians%2011.3)). I suspect this is why he has worked so hard to block the truth about baptism. If it is the entrance into Christ for God’s people ([**Romans 6:3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Romans%206.3)), no wonder he has made sure so many people try other ways in. It should be no surprise to us that, even though baptism’s link with forgiveness seems hard to miss in Scripture ([**Acts 2:38**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%202.38), [**Acts 22:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%2022.16)), most people don’t see it.

This perspective should help us find optimism in the devil’s temptations. After all, if he is working so hard against our efforts, perhaps is it because we have gotten close to some great victory. We have found our way onto the battlefield and have begun waging war ([**2 Corinthians 10:3-5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Corinthians%2010.3-5)), and he is fighting back.

He will fight back in the battle over lost souls. We will set up a time to talk to them and he will seek to take away our opportunity. We will teach the Scripture and he will plant seeds of doubt. Let’s not get discouraged! We have gotten close to a great treasure, and his stumbling blocks verify our nearness.

He will fight us as a church, seeking to tear us apart to keep us from our “progress and joy of faith” ([**Philippians 1:25**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Philippians%201.25)). When we teach God’s life-changing truths and they threaten his, he will work hardest to undermine them and submit perverse teachings into our group to draw men away ([**Acts 20:30**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%2020.30)). He will work hard to make sure we are not all of “one mind” ([**Philippians 1:27**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Phil%201.27)). When we are on the right track evangelistically, we can be sure to meet resistance.

He will fight our individual efforts to discipline ourselves. Inevitably something will come up that threatens to send us back into our old ways.

He will undermine our marital efforts. If our marriages are in danger of strengthening, rest assured the battle is about to begin.

But his resistance should encourage us to work even harder, knowing we are near a great victory. We can rejoice at our conflicts, ***“. . . not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake”*** ([**Philippians 1:28-29**](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Philippians%201.28-29)).