

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts November 2019

God's Hammer

by: R.C. Sproul Jr.



Sometimes, indeed often, we build and maintain our paradigms for our own comfort. Our worldviews are usually less the result of careful, dispassionate, sober-minded analysis and more the result of self-serving, special pleading, rationalization of our sin. We believe not because these beliefs commend themselves to our minds but because in our minds the beliefs commend us. It is these habits of our desperately deceitful hearts that make us miss the voice of God. He speaks, but we hear what we want to.

We come to our Bibles with this most fundamental presupposition—whatever the Bible may be saying, it can't be telling me that my life needs to be fundamentally changed. Wherever the Bible calls

for such change, it must be addressing someone else. Out of this presupposition flows what I call "the diabolical art of simultaneous translation." This is what happens when our eyes roam across the very words of God in Scripture, but our minds change what we read into something safe, something reasonable, something inoffensive. Jesus, for instance, tells us not to worry about what we will eat or what we will wear, that this is what the Gentiles worry about, and that we ought to know that we are under God's care. What our minds hear is something like this: "Those people who are more prosperous than I am need to stop worrying about money. When I get as prosperous as they are, I will be pious enough to no longer worry. Those worrying prosperous people really ought to be ashamed of themselves."

Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and we hear: "Those people who don't believe, who aren't in the kingdom, who don't have the righteousness of

Christ, need to get serious about pursuing these things. Thank heaven I already have this covered. Because I have already done this, I can now devote my time to something important, worrying about what I will wear and what I will eat." When the Bible steps on our toes, we try to quietly tiptoe away. What we're supposed to do is face our sins. What we're supposed to do is repent and believe.

One way we might begin to do battle against this weakness is to come to the Bible with a prior commitment to this basic truth—whatever this text or that text is saying, it is likely that it is speaking to me and my sin. Before we decide whether a covenantal paradigm or a dispensational paradigm makes more sense, before we settle the vexing question of who wrote Hebrews or which gospel was written first, before we figure out whether Genesis 1 and 2 are history or poetry or both, we need to come willing and eager to have the mirror of the Word show us our sins. That will

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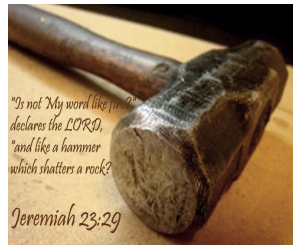
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for my hard heart but has also promised to soften it. He has promised to beat it into submission. As He pounds my heart, He, in turn, opens my ears. Thus, we move from grace to grace, from life to life, from faith to faith.

happen when we expect it to show us our sins.

The Word of God consists of the words of God. Their meanings tell us what His meaning is. They are little mirrors that build the big mirror. They are also, however, little hammers that together make up the sledgehammer God uses to smash our recalcitrant hearts. Because our hearts are hard, we insist on soft words. When alone with our Bibles, we soften our Bibles, translating our hammers into pillows. When in the pew on Sunday morning, we insist on preaching that does not offend, that does not confront, that does not strike, that rests lightly on our stony hearts.

God's hammer smashes not just the icons of the world around us; it also smashes the idols of my heart. It is hard, heavy, even painful, precisely because of the love of the One who wields it. He has promised to forgive me

When our stony hearts are beaten, they do not merely turn into gravel. Instead, they turn to soil—soft, welcoming soil. And then the Word no longer comes as a hammer but as seed. The soft ground of our hearts welcomes that Word, and soon it bears fruit, multiplying thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold. Soon we find that we have ears to hear and eyes to see, and the very mystery of the parables unfolds before us. If we would hear, we must be willing to hear. If we would be willing, He must make us willing.

His kingdom is that place where His Word is heard, welcomed, and obeyed. That same Word has promised that if we will drop everything for the sake of the kingdom, all these things will be added to us. Therefore, His kingdom is where worry about tomorrow is banished. God's Word is a hammer, but it is a hammer that speaks

blessing to us. May He be pleased to give us ears to hear the blessings that He speaks.

[Used with permission: Ligonier Ministries, Tabletalk, November 2011]

“Have you never noticed that some people who are ill and are ordered to take pills are foolish enough to chew them? That is a very nauseous thing to do, though I have done it myself. The right way to take medicine of such a kind is to swallow it at once. In the same way there are some things in the Word of God which are undoubtedly true which must be swallowed at once by an effort of faith, and must not be chewed by perpetual questioning. Let the difficult doctrines go down whole into your very soul by a grand exercise of confidence in God.”

~ C.H. Spurgeon



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