

Some paper shredders are small and inexpensive units that shred only a few pages at a time, while others are large and expensive commercial machines that can shred millions of pages per hour. Regardless of the size, make, or model, we all probably know something about paper shredders.

This Reformation Day, we meet Mr. Paper Shredder himself—King Jehoiakim. Our text is Jeremiah 36:23 (NIV): “Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe’s knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire.” The *Js* in this passage are wild! Here we have *Jehudi* who is in *Judah* of *Jerusalem* in 604 BC reading *Jeremiah* while King *Jehoiakim* shreds it with a knife!

Our paper shredders today destroy bills, credit cards, bank statements, and other sensitive documents. But Jehoiakim shreds God’s Word. Who in their right mind would cut up and shred God’s Word? Especially God’s Word in Jeremiah?

Listen to the Gospel as we find it woven throughout the book Jeremiah:

“I will raise up for David a righteous Branch and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called, the Lord is our

righteousness” (23:5–6).

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (29:11).

“I have loved you with an everlasting love” (31:3).

“Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow” (31:13).

“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (31:34).

What got into Jehoiakim that he shredded God’s Word? You know. So do I. This is the work of *the* Paper Shredder. We don’t know him by that name though. Instead, we know him by the names of Liar, Deceiver, Destroyer, Serpent, Devil, and Satan. Satan doesn’t want us to have delight in God’s Word . . . power in God’s Word . . . hope in God’s Word . . . life in God’s Word . . . forgiveness in God’s Word. So, Satan shreds God’s Word every chance he gets. Would you like some proof?

A recent George Barna survey of *Christians* found these stunning results: Fifty-eight percent didn’t know who preached the Sermon on the Mount. Fifty-

two percent didn't know that the Book of Jonah is in the Bible. Seventy percent didn't know that "God helps those who help themselves" is *not* in the Bible.

Fifteen percent agreed that the Gospels are Matthew, Mark, *Luther*, and John.

Why does Satan shred God's Word? So he can shred our lives! Satan meets us in the morning and says, "This day is hopeless; go back to bed." In the bathroom, he says, "You're ugly. How could anyone love you?" At the end of the day, he says, "You're a sorry excuse for a Christian. God is finished with you!" Without God's Word to push back against these lies, Satan chews us up and spits us out.

Martin Luther knows. He writes in "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," "The old evil foe Now means deadly woe; Deep guile and great might Are his dread arms in fight; On earth is not his equal" (*LSB* 656:1). That's why Luther embraced God's Word—with all his might, especially in Romans:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (3:23–24).

"He was delivered over to death for our sins and raised again for our justification" (4:25).

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God

through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1).

“Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more” (5:20).

Enter *another* paper shredder—the medieval Roman Catholic Church! In 1517, an archbishop named Albert of Brandenburg set out to silence Luther.

Why is that? Albert was selling indulgences to pay off his debt to the pope. What are indulgences? The pope taught that indulgences—pieces of paper purchased by people and signed by the church—lessened people’s time in purgatory.

Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses taught that indulgences were bogus. Because people began believing Luther instead of the church, Albert was losing out on lots of money! God’s Word must be shredded!

Then in July 1519, a debate was held in Leipzig, Germany. John Eck upheld Rome’s position—that people are saved, in large part, by what they do. Luther still wouldn’t budge on salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, for Christ’s sake alone. After the debate, Pope Leo X excommunicated the reformer. The excommunication began with these words from Psalm 80:13, “Arise, O Lord, a wild boar has invaded your vineyard.” Who was the wild boar invading the church’s vineyard? Martin Luther! God’s Word must be silenced and shredded!

It all came to a head at an imperial assembly in Worms, Germany. On April 17, 1521, the Roman Catholic Church demanded that Luther recant (that is, renounce his teachings). Luther asked for an evening to think about it. Then, on April 18, the reformer announced, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant! Here I stand! I can do no other. God help me.” This is 1 Peter 1:25: “The word of the Lord endures forever” (NIV). Rome responded, “God’s Word must be silenced, censored, and shredded.”

Luther’s courage, spine, and conviction came from the central teaching in God’s Word—Christ crucified for sinners. Christ crucified means every one of God’s promises in Jeremiah is now yours. Christ is your righteousness. Christ has plans to give you hope and a future. Christ loves you with an everlasting love. Because of Christ crucified, God changes our mourning into joy and our sorrow into gladness. And because of Christ crucified, God forgives our iniquity and remembers our sin no more.

That’s because a Roman governor named Pontius Pilate gave Jesus over to professional shredders. They ripped up and shredded skin from the Savior’s back, preparing him for the biggest, most industrial-grade shredder of the day.

And what was that called? *Mors turpissima crucis*—that's Latin for what Rome called its shredder—"the utterly vile death on a cross." Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried. Is that the end? No!

Jeremiah36:32 says, "Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch ... and as Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote on it all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And many similar words were added to them." Let me repeat the last line. "And many similar words were added to them!" Jeremiah says, "Mess with my sermon and the next time I'll add to it!" God resurrected Jeremiah's scroll—and then some!

Jeremiah's resurrected scroll points ahead to another resurrected scroll—and then some! Christ, the Word made flesh, rose again. Those who saw Christ alive on Easter were beside themselves. Mary cried out, "Rabboni!" The Emmaus disciples exclaimed, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road?" Then one week later Thomas saw Jesus too and confessed, "My Lord and my God!"

Alive with the life of Jesus and the breath of the Holy Spirit—God's Holy

Word—is the living voice of the Gospel. For you, right now, it announces forgiveness for all your sin, showers you with grace, and rekindles your hope. God’s Word announces that weakness is power, loss is gain, and servanthood is greatness. And wherever God’s Word is preached, studied, read, and memorized, it is victorious over every satanic force that seeks to destroy its Holy Spirit power.

Let’s hear from Luther one more time. He said: “My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant. Here I stand!” The reformer took his stand upon 1 Peter 1:25, “The word of the Lord endures forever” (NIV). The Latin is *Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum*.

VDMA. Luther and his followers sewed VDMA on their coat sleeves and cloaks. Today we place VDMA deep in our hearts and minds. To all paper shredders, we boldly confess, “*Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum*.” “The word of the Lord endures forever. Here we stand!” Amen.