

1933 Nazi Germany

Jewish, pacifist, Religious, classical liberal, anarchist, socialist,
and communist writings were destroyed

Same thing happened to Jewish Manuscripts – 1244 in Paris

And Aztec and Mayan Manuscripts – the 1200's

Bishop Athanasius – 325 AD- All bible writings not approved by him.

Roman Emperor Constantine – 300 AD – didn't like what Arius wrote

China's Qin Dynasty – 200 BC- Scholars writings were turned to ash.

Through history - book burning has been used
to silence and oppress ideologies that were
unaccepted by those in charge.

And the first instance may have been back in Jeremiah.

Israel the people and the leaders were not listening to God, not following
God. So God sent Jeremiah – to set them straight . As he has done
countless times before with prophets.

Jeremiah banned from temple, probably for speaking for God,
so he wrote the prophecy on a scroll, and his friend Baruch
read the scroll – which turned out to be a not so gentle nudge
towards repentance and acknowledging God's forgiveness.

King Jehoiakim didn't like it – so he burns it.

He is in power, he is living the high life – and does whatever he wants.

- “Now the king was sitting in his winter apartment, and there was a fire burning before him. And after each column he took his knife, sliced off a piece of scroll, and burned it.”
- His privilege as king has blinded him. His ego and power has gone to his head. He can't hear, or see, or taste God's covenant.

What gets in our way of hearing God's promise? Of living out God's promise?

What prevents the covenant from being written on our hearts.

- Our time, our schedules, our busyness.
- Doubt and fear.
- Even our own wealth, status, race – may prevent us from living God's covenant.
- Our ability to choose...our freedom of choice, our free will – ironically – gets in the way.
- When we have to think about what is right/good/best; sin creeps in, and it isn't written on our hearts just yet. The very fact that we have to weigh options and process doing good for each other shows our inherent sinfulness.

Just think about coming to worship, or giving to a charity, or volunteering at the food pantry – all choices.

- When we have control and get to decide how to serve God, it also means we can choose not to serve. God's word, covenant is still in our minds – and not yet written on our hearts. It isn't second nature yet.
- Similar to the King, we have privileges not always seen, that tend to overshadow our own ability to listen to God's Word.
- But...God is still working on us.

God is persistent, continually bringing the word to us, even though it may still be in the process of being inscribed into us. That is God's covenant. The promise. It is why we do worship and communion regularly, eating and drinking of Christ's presence, so that doing God's will is no longer a choice. It is just what we do.

- Law written on scroll is go to worship, church...the promise written on our hearts is too worship God in all we do, wherever we go, being the church.
- The law on the scroll is "do good." But the promise written on our hearts is acknowledging that the only reason we are good at all is because of God's presence with us.

Remember the prayer we just prayed? God write your word upon our hearts, so that we need no scroll, no book, no script to know that you love us.

- God's story is found in this Bible – but more precious than the Bible, than any words written on this scroll – is God's love story found in you. God taking ashes, and making something beautiful. You being God's voice of love and forgiveness and peace to a stranger. Without a second thought.

The King wanted God's promise to be silenced, but as in most cases, book burning was not a terribly effective strategy for control. Instead of eliminating the word of God, God's message become more powerful. Because it continued on through Isaiah, and Baruch, and the people.

The greatest news – is that nothing stops God's word.

Not indifference. Or any attempt to destroy it. Or our failure to live it out.

God just will always find a way to communicate the message.

Scrolls, books, text, Facebook, twitter, email, newspapers – all might deliver God's hope, promise, new covenant.

But God's old way of communicating, person to person, heart to heart, with God's word inscribed into us – written on our hearts – may be the best. As we worship, we practice building relationships with others, as we pray, as we eat together, as we confess, as we splash in the baptismal promises together. So that it is second nature.

God's greatest tool to deliver God's message for today – is you. Living lives of grace, and acceptance, and unity – speaks more volumes than any library of books.

God builds promises on hope rather than the condemnation. God's covenant with us inclusive, not divisive, relational, not distant, divine, not human.

Freed from sin, we are freed to serve, and proclaim, and love.

We have a God who is persistent, who comes to us, who forgives our iniquities, who forgets our sins, who dies and rises to open up life for us.

Nothing will silence God's word. Nothing will stop God from continuing to bring goodness to this world. Nothing will censor the love of God from your life. Nothing will destroy God's promise, God's covenant – crafted for you, through the life and death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Nothing will get in the way God's love.