

**Jeremiah 31: 27-34; “Covenant Faithfulness Displayed”, Sermon #35 in the series –
“Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on, October 28th, 2018,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

When Jeremiah heard in verses 23-25 that the Lord was going to bring the house of Israel and the house of Judah back again from their captivity, it made him very joyful. When he heard that God was someday going to make her a home of justice, and a mountain of holiness, he could hardly believe his ears. His sorrowful and weary soul was made happy, and his sleep was sweet to him. The reason that things would be so very much better for Israel would be because God was not just going to bring Israel back from their captivity at in 70 years, but in the process of time, He was going to make a New Covenant with Israel which would be much better than the Old one which Israel had been under since He brought them out of Egypt. A Covenant, Nehemiah Coxe says is – “A declaration of God’s sovereign pleasure concerning the benefits he will bestow on them, the communion they will have with Him, and the way and means by which this will be enjoyed by them.” Our own 1689 Confession states that – “The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some a voluntary condescension on God’s part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.”

Here in these verses which I have read to you, we see God’s covenant faithfulness displayed. His covenant faithfulness is displayed 1st of all – To the house of Israel in Old Covenant times in terms of His being a faithful Husband to them. 2nd – His covenant faithfulness is displayed in the New Covenant which He would make through Jesus Christ our Lord. And 3rd – His covenant is displayed in the fact that all of those in this New Covenant will know God, from the greatest to the least of them. I pray that the Lord will open the eyes of our understanding this morning, to see the greatness of the grace which has been given to each person who believes in Jesus Christ.

1st of all – God’s covenant faithfulness is displayed in His being a faithful Husband to Israel in Old Covenant times and New. (verses 27-32)

“And it shall come to pass, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.” Now, these words may seem at first glance to mean something quite spiritually mystical when you first hear them. But when you study it out and you think about it, all that God is saying here is that though the numbers of men and beasts had become much smaller in the land of Israel, God would, after the 70 years captivity, once again populate the land with man and beast. The picture is of God sowing a field, that is the land of Israel, with seed, which as time goes by, springs up and produces a large increase. (Gill) The meaning of this verse is amplified in verse 28 where God says that “just as He had watched over them to pluck up and throw down, that He would now watch over them to build the nation of Israel and to plant them back in their own land”. The city and the first temple had previously been destroyed and the people taken into captivity, but now God would providentially so order things, that in those years, they would be able to rebuild their city and its wall, and rebuild the temple. And His people, His worshipers, would be in this temple, once again, as His pleasant plants, his plants which He would rejoice in; those who would know all of the reality of the blessings of grace which He would bring to them, being watered by the Spirit and built up by the ministry of the word, so that they grow and become fruitful. (Gill on 31: 28)

These verses are saying that the whole direction of the providential expression of God’s judgment was going to change, toward Israel, because in the days when He would make this New Covenant, their Old Covenant, their national covenant would come to an end, with its fulfillment of the Mosaic law by Christ. This change for them would come on the basis of God’s sending the Lord Jesus into this world, first to the nation of Israel, that everything would be providentially ordered

for the good of His elect people among the nation of Israel; their being delivered from their sins, and their coming to be brought to the place where they would lovingly obey God's law, and not be dealt with by Him in terms of strict justice; that is, getting what they surely deserved for their disobedience and unfaithfulness to Him – the strict justice of national judgment of national, which would affect both believers and unbelievers among them.

Let's think first about the guilt of their national sins, and the way that God thinks of them. Listen to verse 29 – “In those days they shall say no more: ‘the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.’ “But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.” “In those days” means the days of the restoration of the nation, first in the Old Testament times. The fathers eating sour grapes refers to all of those idolatrous sinful Israelites who partook of the grapes of sin, God then sending His judgments upon them because they would not repent. But sometimes the effects of the judgments that He sent, carried over to affect the next generation as well; sometimes to the third and fourth generations. The fathers partook of these sins which led the nation into idolatry, and the children's teeth were set on edge, because they now could expect that nothing but judgment would come to them. But God declares here, according to His great equity in judgment, and His great love for those whom He had chosen to eternal life, that on the basis of the New Covenant which He would make with them, in and through Jesus Christ our Lord, that things would be different for Israel; first in that day, that they would receive mercy when they did not deserve it, as a nation. And then second, they would be brought back and rebuilt and some among them would be saved.

But then, in thinking about national Israel we must also think about them in terms of the fathers eating sour grapes, in regard to their greater sin as a nation; that of crucifying the Lord of Glory when He came into the world to save sinners such as they were. The Lord Jesus came into the world in order to become the fulfillment of all of these promises of salvation; but the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth have been set on edge. You will remember that when Christ was arraigned by the Jewish leaders, that they brought Him before Pilate. In Matthew 27: 22, Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” “They all said to him, ‘Let Him be crucified!’” “Then the governor said, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’” “But they cried out all the more, saying, ‘Let Him be crucified!’” “When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.’” “You see to it.” “And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’”

Now this is the reason why God's judgments came upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and why the children's teeth have been set on edge all down through history to this very day. The Jews have not been able to expect anything but judgment because of their crucifixion of Christ. His blood has been upon them and their children all this time. But because of the New Covenant which God made with Christ, and with them, in Christ, this will insure that some Jews would be saved all during this Church age, until God shows His greatest mercy of all to them, in their national conversion in a coming day. There is no doubt in my mind, that there is a double fulfillment to these verses; that is, the restoration of Israel back to her land from her captivity after the 70 years were fulfilled, and then the second, the greater and more ultimate fulfillment in New Testament times; the restoration and conversion of the Jews, which will take place in due time.

Even in our days we see the anticipation of this; the political nation of Israel coming back into existence after almost 2,000 years, their having been brought back into their land once again, even as has been prophesied in many places in the prophets. But what we need to focus on now, is the Person who would become the basis of all of these blessings which would be ordered by God's providence. The basis of all of those blessings being conveyed, and God's covenant faithfulness being displayed, was God's sending of His Son, to be the Savior and Lord of all who believe in the promise of salvation through what He would do to fulfill God's law and die as a sacrifice for sins. It would be Christ's complete fulfillment of every jot and tittle of God's holy law, and His suffering a

cruel death on the cross, which would become the basis of all of God's elect people who are a part of national Israel, either Old Testament or New; their being saved and being blessed with all the blessings of salvation.

This is why the apostle Paul could say in Romans chapter 11 – “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” “And so, all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come of our of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins. I hope that you can here, that in this New Covenant which God would make, it started with God's particularly addressing the whole house of Israel. The New Covenant was instituted through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And according to this New Covenant, their sins, that is the sins of the Jews as a nation, will be taken away. And certainly we know that this same New Covenant has come to be applied to all the elect remnant of Jewish believers all the way down through the Church age. But in this chapter of Jeremiah and many other places in the Bible, it is prophesied that on the basis of this New Covenant that God will also bring about, in the Lord's time, their national conversion as well.

Let us further remember that when Christ died, that in His death, He broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile and made them into one New Man in the Church. This insures the salvation of all of God's elect, both Jew and Gentile. But what Paul is now speaking of here in verses 26 and 27 of Romans chapter 11 is an act of salvation which will turn the whole nation away from ungodliness. Right now, concerning the gospel they are “enemies for our sakes, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.” “For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.” In other words, they having been called as an elect nation in Old Testament times, and the fathers having eaten sour grapes, has not changed God's ultimate purpose from being fulfilled, in Christ, in relation to them. Paul says in Romans 11: 30 – “For as you were once disobedient to God, yet you have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.” “For God has committed them all to disobedience that He might have mercy upon all.” “Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” “How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” And so, we see the greatness of the New Covenant to take away the national sins of Israel, according to His purpose in election, and His full intention to bless them as a spiritual Husband; betrothing them to Himself forever.

Now 2nd – God's Covenant Faithfulness is displayed in His putting His law into the mind and writing it on the heart of everyone trusting in Christ.

Verse 33 – “But this is the covenant that will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” When it says – “after those days” it means after those days of the Old Testament time period, after Christ who was the fulfillment of all of God's promises to Israel finished His ministry, died on the cross, and came forth from the grave. When He rose from the dead victorious, conquering sin and death, He ascended on high to take His seat at God's right hand; He who then had accomplished redemption was pleased to apply it in a way that showed that the Old Covenant was getting ready to disappear. This whole passage that we are studying here in Jeremiah is quoted by the writer of the book of Hebrews in chapter 8, verses 8-12. In chapter 8, verses 6 and 7 it says: “But now He (that is Christ) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.” “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.”

So we must understand from these verses that there were some things in the Old Covenant, the covenant which was made by God with Israel at Mt. Sinai, that showed forth its deficiency as a covenant. The Old Covenant was given to Moses as a written code and record, and as tablets of stone in the Ten Commandments. What were its faults? Well, we know for certain that its faults

were not a result of some fault in God's design of this covenant. In that regard, it is like everything else that God does. His work is perfect. In Deuteronomy 32, verse 3 Moses himself proclaims the name of the Lord. He says – "For I proclaim the name of the Lord: Ascribe greatness to our God." "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He." No, the fault with the Old Covenant does not lie with God. It lies in the fact that the law of God by itself was inadequate to deal with the problem of sin or help the sinner to do God's will.

The law could define righteousness and unrighteousness and sin, but it could not enable the person to keep it. It could not give the life and strength to keep it. It was a perfect representation of God's righteousness, and of what God expected from man, but it could not help the person who was under it, to keep it. It could demand that it be kept, and it could condemn when it was not being kept, or when it was broken. But it could not give any man the ability to keep it in all of its fullness and extent. Let us acknowledge that the law of the Lord is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good. The Ten Commandments told the Israelite, and all men who would hear of it, their duty. But it could not create faith in anyone's heart so as to keep the commandments in a way glorifying to God. The law is not of faith it says in Galatians 3: 12. The law is all about perfect obedience. If a man could do God's commandments perfectly, he would live by them.

And, in Galatians 3: 9 it says this – "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'" And so, this is the reason for the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, Christ would fulfill God's law perfectly. He would keep the commandments of God in all of their details, perfectly, and He would do them in such a way that God and His law were honored and magnified, and thus God would receive glory through all of Christ's obedience. This is why you must believe in the Lord Jesus. You have not, and you cannot keep the law of God perfectly. Your obedience is only partial, and it will not be sufficient to justify you before God, as being a righteous person. But the person who would be just must live by faith. Christ's obedience to God's law is complete and perfect in every way. And therefore, you must believe in Him and not think that your works will bring you salvation, or life, or bring you to heaven.

Furthermore, the Old Covenant was made in a special place and time in Israel's history and it was intended by God to last only until Christ came. God brought Israel into the land of Canaan; this good earthly land flowing with milk and honey. The Old Covenant was given to them when they left Egypt and they were brought into the wilderness for their unbelief and disobedience to God. The law was a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. It was not given to show Israel what they could do in their own strength of obedience. It was given to point out to all men that only one Person could fulfill God's law perfectly, and that was Christ. God showed this fact forth in many types and shadows in His law, communicating this to His Old Testament people, the Jews. When the Lord took them as a nation by the hand and led them out of Egyptian bondage, He did display His power to them, and He became a savior to them, to demonstrate his power to redeem His people from all distress, His power to lead them and guide them to a land flowing with milk and honey – the land of Canaan. At Mt. Sinai He would display His holiness and justice and Majesty to Israel.

It says in our text that He took them into a marital relationship with Himself – in covenant – that He would be faithful to them and they should be faithful to Him; to keep His commandments and statutes. But in verse 32 of Jeremiah 31 it says that they broke His covenant, even though He was a Husband to them. In other words, His covenant was good, and He kept His side of the Covenant by delivering them from their enemies, giving them many indications that they should not trust in themselves that they were righteous, but in Him and the righteousness that He would provide in Christ, but their hearts were not right before Him. In Deuteronomy 5: 29, God says to Moses concerning Israel – "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children

forever.” How does God resolve this problem, for Israel and for all Gentiles who would be saved? He resolves it through Christ suffering and dying on the cross. The Old Covenant’s sacrificial system was inadequate to really deal with sins. It was a shadow the good things that would take place when Christ would come and suffer and die in our place.

And so it says in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 5 it says – “Therefore when Christ came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.’ “In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.” “Then Christ said, ‘Behold I have come – In the volume of the book it is written of Me – To do Your will, O God.’ “Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ “He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” “By that will (the holy will of Jesus Christ to obey God in all things and to actually do the will of God in all things) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

This is the reason that the Old Covenant was not adequate to deal with the problem of sin. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins. In those sacrifices there was a reminder of sins every year, and those offerings of bulls and goats could not actually cleanse the worshipers. The cleansing of sin and its being purged from your life, can only take place by faith in the precious blood of Christ. But once Christ had accomplished redemption, by the shedding of His blood, He would also then send the Spirit in greater measure to individual believers; a greater measure than ever was seen before Christ finished this mighty work of redemption. The way that He and the Father would work through the Spirit is found in our text in verse 33 – “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Ah, what glorious news is this! If sinful man cannot keep God’s law, God will be gracious to him and write it on his heart and place it in his mind. This writing that is being talked about, is a spiritual writing.

Turn with me over to 2nd Corinthians chapter 3, verse 1 and we will see this spiritual writing explained a bit further. The apostle Paul says – “Do we begin to commend ourselves?” “Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?” “You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is of the heart.” “And we have such trust through Christ toward God.” “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, (that is – the letter of the law) but the Spirit gives life.” What the Holy Spirit does, through the New Covenant is to place God’s law in our mind, and write it upon our hearts in regeneration, through our being born again. We are not only given spiritual life, but we have been given a spiritual understanding of the significance of God’s law to our being able to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. That is, we think that learning God’s law and doing God’s law by the power of the Spirit is the most lovely and wonderful thing in life.

Now in order to understand this, we need to see that we as Christians do not live our lives in a legalistic sense; thinking that we are sufficient in ourselves to see anything as being from ourselves, but our being borne up, our being led and carried along to a greater obedience to God and to our Christ comes from God the Spirit’s work in having written His law on our heart. God makes us sufficient, both as ministers and as disciples. I am a minister of the new covenant to you, in my preaching of the word to you, and because God’s law has been written on my heart, I do not preach to you the letter of the law – “Do this and live”. I do not tell you that you can keep God’s commandments because you can somehow do this in your own strength or by your own wisdom. No, I explain to you that it is the Spirit who gives life, and then you will grow in your understanding of what God has done in giving you His Holy Spirit, and what He is doing for you in this great salvation which has come to you in Christ. You will meditate upon God’s law day and night and have good success in all of your following Christ. You will learn the way of the Lord, and you will

be going about to keep the commandments of God, as you learn to walk by faith and not in the strength of the flesh or by your own evaluation of yourself. You are one of God's people, and you know it by the fact that He has changed your heart to love Him for what He has done, and what He is doing for you in Christ, by His grace. This grace of the Spirit leads you to greater levels of obedience, and understanding His will, because He has written this on your heart, and you love Him for it.

3rd – God's covenant faithfulness is displayed in the fact that everyone in the New Covenant all know Him from the least to the greatest.

Verse 34 – “No more shall every man teach his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord’, for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord.” “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” What a tremendous truth this is! Under the Old Covenant there were some, perhaps even many, who did not know the Lord. They were being taught the knowledge of the Lord in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures, and they could come to know the Lord only by faith in God's promises concerning the Messiah, the One who alone could take away their sins. This was well pictured in the ceremonial law with its sacrifices and offerings. It was pictured well in the great things that God did for Israel; delivering them from their bondage in Egypt, delivering them from Pharaoh in bringing them through the waters of the Red Sea, by dividing the waters and bringing them safely through, while drowning the entire Egyptian army. It pictured by His giving them water from the Rock in the wilderness, and His leading faithfully leading them through this wilderness by providing for them Manna for 40 years and shoes which did not wear out. It was pictured by God's dealing with them faithfully according to this covenant as a Husband. But all this was not enough to insure that they would all come to know Him. Only the New Covenant, which Christ lived and died to secure the blessings of, will avail to take away all your sins. Only the New Covenant of Christ shedding His precious blood could bring effectual cleansing, so that men, believing in Him, whether Jew or Gentile, would think and act in a spiritual way which would be pleasing to God.

God's bringing people into covenant relationship with Himself is His sovereign work, and it is a wonderful work in that it is all secure and sure because of Christ. But, nevertheless, you must believe; yes, you must believe. And when you will come to understand the sureness of this covenant; that all Christians from the least to the greatest, have been taught by the Father and have been given grace. In 1st John 2: 21 – “You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” Knowing the Lord is not merely a matter of didactic teaching of doctrine, and brethren we ought to remember this. There are many doctrines that are to be learned from the New Testament and from all of the Bible, but our responsibility is to see that we take heed to the formation of our Christian character, not merely that we have knowledge. “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies, it says in 1st Corinthians 8: 1. The reality of our faith and our holiness will be seen foremostly of all, in the way that we treat each other. Do you love the brethren? That is the evidence that you have moved from death to life.

All in the New Covenant from the least the greatest must realize that knowing the Lord is our great object; knowing and learning what would please Him. Do you pursue peace with all men, and the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. If you believe in Christ you have been brought into this New Covenant by faith in Him. You love God and you love the brethren because you have been given spiritual understanding. You are part of the family of God, and you are taught by God, and you are learning from Christ Himself. He says, “Come unto Me, all you who are weary and who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls.” Notice the connection; rest for your soul is found when you are willing to learn from Him. He is the gentlest of teachers. He is humble of heart. He carefully considers the eternal welfare of all who put their trust in Him. No legalism here; only a heart that longs to know Him better.