

**Jeremiah 11: 1-23; “God’s Covenant Faithfulness Displayed”, Sermon # 11 in the series - “Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 14th, 2013,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

When a man is called to preach the Word of God he is under solemn obligation to bring forth all the truths that relate to God’s righteous character. He must declare that God will always act in complete accordance with His own glorious attributes.” This is called His faithfulness. God has faithfully declared to all men what is right and what is wrong in the Bible. He has made many precious and magnificent promises in both Old Testament and New, by which we will be saved; if we believe them. All of this is based upon His Covenant faithfulness. He has also given all men warning of terrible and awful judgment, which is coming when our Lord returns. This judgment will be according to men’s works, and it will continue on after death, forever, unto all eternity, if we do not repent and believe in Jesus Christ. In this, too, God’s faithfulness is displayed. Salvation is all of grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, for people in both Old Testament and New Testament times. Men will often thank you when you tell them of some imminent physical danger, such as putting your ladder up too close to the power line. But rarely will they thank you when you tell them of their imminent spiritual dangers, such as that of loving their sins, holding on to their sins, and dying in their sins. In the case of many people in our day, they are stubbornly holding out against a good, and loving, and faithful God. He is faithful in His promises of salvation if we will believe in Christ. But He is also faithful in His promises to punish the careless and unbelieving forever, if they do not repent.

In this passage, God’s faithfulness to act in accordance with His righteous character is seen in bringing His judgments against unrepentant sinners. It is also seen in His helping the righteous man to do the right thing in distressing circumstances. This does pertain to all of us here this afternoon. So we will ask this question: How is God’s faithfulness displayed to men?” And we will answer it by saying – God’s faithfulness is displayed to men in that, 1st – He is faithful to His Covenant, in both Old Testament times and New. (verses 1-8) 2nd – He faithfully shows men the implications of their sins, in both Old Testament times and New. (verses 9-17) And 3rd – He faithfully tests the heart and the mind in both Old Covenant and New. (verses 18-23)

1st of all – Let us understand that God is faithful to His Covenant, in both Old Testament times and New. (verses 1-8)

The covenant being referred to here is the first, or Old Covenant, as the writer of the book of Hebrews calls it in Hebrews Chapter 8, verse 7, and Hebrews 8: 13. It was the covenant made with the nation of Israel on the day that God brought them out of Egypt, from “the iron furnace”, as it is called here in our text, in verse 4. God was going to bring them out of bondage and take them to be His peculiar people. He was going to give them their own land, and they would be given His law – His commandments, His promises, and His precepts. And God’s expectation was that they would obey His voice. This, I believe, was to them, as a nation, a re-iteration of the Covenant of Works which was given to Adam in the Garden of Eden in the beginning. God was going to test the whole nation of the Jews, as one man, by their obedience to hold fast this covenant. He had done these mighty things for them; physically delivering them from their bondage in Egypt, to serve Him. He had done physical wonders for them in the parting of the Red Sea, in the giving of the manna to feed them in the wilderness, and water from the rock to satisfy and quench their thirst. And those wonders were meant to point them to faith in the promised Messiah, the One whom the Lord would send to redeem them. We want to see that God, in the giving of the Old Covenant did have some unconditional promises which He attached to it, which are typical of the salvation under the New Covenant, and so turn with me over to Exodus 6, verses 1-8.

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.’ ‘For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.’ ‘And God spoke to Moses and said to him: ‘I am the Lord.’ ‘I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them.’ ‘I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.’ ‘And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.’ ‘Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.’ ‘I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.’ ‘Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.’ ‘And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage.’ ‘I am the Lord.’ You will notice that there are seven, ‘I wills’ here, which show what God would do for them, to give them the physical blessings of freedom, and spiritual blessings of salvation if they would exercise faith in the typical wonders that He would do for them. ‘I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.’ ‘I will rescue you from their bondage.’ ‘I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.’ ‘I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.’ ‘I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham...’ And ‘I will give it to you as a heritage.’ But a part of this first, or Old Covenant, was also conditions for these blessings to continue and be multiplied. If you will turn to Exodus 19: 3-6 you will see this. ‘And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.’ ‘Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special people; for all the earth is Mine.’ ‘And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ The first condition was that they obey God’s voice, and keep His covenant. The people’s response to this is found in verse 8. ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do.’ And so here we find the Lord in Jeremiah 11 being faithful to His covenant. He had sworn to give them a land flowing with milk and honey. And he did so. He heard their cries. He gave them great deliverance, and great provision. He showed them His power to give them everything that they needed for life and godliness. But still, they could not keep His covenant.

Turn with me over to Psalm 81, verse 10. ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.’ ‘But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me.’ ‘So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels.’ ‘Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways!’ ‘I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries.’ ‘The haters of the Lord would pretend submission to Him, but their fate would endure forever.’ ‘He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat; and with honey from the rock I would have satisfied you.’ You can see here their problem. They would not listen to God’s voice even though He had done so much for them. Something was missing from this Old Covenant, and it wasn’t God’s faithfulness. The truth is found by our turning to Deuteronomy Chapter 5, verse 29. Here we find that Moses has just received the law on Mt. Sinai, and when the children of Israel heard the voice of God from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that they came near to Moses and told him that they did not want to hear God’s voice any longer because they were afraid and thought that they would die. Verse 28 says, ‘Then the Lord heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me: ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you.’ ‘They are right in all that they have spoken.’ ‘Oh that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!’ They needed a new heart to hear and heed God’s voice; and to fear Him, and keep His commandments. The Old Covenant did not promise this. It said, ‘Obey my voice’. The nation of Israel, like Adam, transgressed God’s covenant of works to them.

And so, God, having foreseen that this would happen, even long before, in eternity past, knew even then that He would need to make a New Covenant, one which would be enacted upon better promises and a better sacrifice than the blood of bulls and goats; even that of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, you see, considers it very important to all of the Jews and all men everywhere of all generations, to show them demonstrably, that no man can by any means produce sufficient consistency of obedience to God's voice in order that they could keep God's covenant. This was certainly because of Adam's fall in the beginning, but it is also demonstrably confirmed in Israel's failure to heed God's voice and keep His commandments to them. Both had every reason to do so; both failed. So, on both the individual and the national level, the Covenant of Works has been broken, and it has been conclusively demonstrated by God that a New Covenant was needed, one whose fulfillment would depend upon what God would do Himself; sending Christ to do what Adam could not do, and also to fulfill what Israel would fail to do in keeping the law.

Jeremiah 31: 31 – “Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.” “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.” “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.” Now here is the promised grace of the New Covenant; God putting His law in the minds and the hearts of those who would believe in Christ. And it was not only to be applied to those who lived after He came in His incarnation, but also to those who would live by faith in the promises of the coming Christ. His grace would be conveyed prospectively, and the gospel would be preached in the lively types of Christ built into the whole sacrificial system of the Mosaic law. The reality of grace typified there, as well as in the grace pictured in the miraculous wonders performed by God on behalf of the people in bringing them out of Egypt, and His providing for them physically in the wilderness; these physical wonders were intended by God to convey the common grace of the gospel of Christ to Israel. And, if they had trusted in God, believing in this common grace (common to them as a people, but uncommon to all other men), then they might also find spiritual and eternal life according to God's sovereign will in election. And although the Covenant of Grace was not formally concluded until Christ came and lived and died on behalf of those Old Testament saints, there were nevertheless some among Old Testament Israel who received regenerating grace, and were justified in exactly the same way as New Testament saints; only they were looking forward to all that Christ would accomplish on their behalf. We now look back on His finished work.

Now 2ndly – God faithfully shows men the implications of their sins, both Old Testament times and New. (verses 9-19)

Verse 9 says – “And the Lord said to me, ‘A conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.’ “They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words.” The reason that the Lord had entered into covenant with this people was so that they would be a special treasure; a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. The reason that God entered into a second covenant through Jesus Christ was so that we, too, as elect Gentiles might enter in with elect Jews, and together form the one Church; the one Israel of God. Those who believe in Jesus Christ believe in pursuing a thorough repentance from all of their sins. They will learn to depart from evil, who call upon the name of the Lord. It is not as though all true believers do not have remaining corruption alongside of their regenerate hearts, and it is not as though they do not sin every day in some ways in their thoughts or actions. But if they are a true Christian, they will listen to the voice of the Lord in the Bible. They will learn, by grace, to confess their sins, and to forsake them. The people of Jeremiah's own city of Anathoth

wanted to take his life for speaking plainly of the judgments of the Lord against them. They really did not want to repent. In verse 15 of our text it says, “What has My beloved to do in My house, having done lewd deeds with many?” “And the holy flesh has passed from you.” “When you do evil, then you rejoice.” “The Lord called your name Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit.” “With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken.” The lewdness here spoken of was their spiritual harlotry as a nation. Their holy flesh passing from them was their failure to offer the right kind of sacrifice to God. They needed a broken and contrite heart over all of their sins, but they did not desire it. Therefore, even though they had been in past generations a Green Olive Tree in regard to their church state and their nation; it was so no longer. It is possible to be religious and to conspire against the people of God. Yes, it is possible to even conspire against God Himself; to run down the doctrine that must be believed – “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12: 14) O my friends! Do not call me a legalist when I say that the Lord of the Lord, His commandments, are good and right and true. It is true that by the works of the law no flesh can be justified, but it is also true that unless the law which has been written on your heart does not come out in your words and actions in good works; you had better go back and check the writing; check the foundation of regeneration. If you love Me, Jesus says, keep My commandments. Keep them not to merit favor, but to learn to please God and walk with Him.

And lastly – God’s faithfulness is displayed in the way that He tests the heart and the mind, in both Old Testament times and New.

Verse 20 says, “But, O Lord of hosts, You who judge righteously, testing the mind and the heart, let me see Your vengeance on them, for to You I have revealed my cause.” God always tests the mind and searches the heart, and He does it in order to give help to the righteous and to thwart the wicked. God does not have to search long and hard to find what is in the heart of wicked men; even when they hide what they are doing from others, God sees it all. He give to them according to their wicked deeds. “Behold I will punish them,” He says in verse 22. But the righteous person wants to have his heart searched by God; he wants to be right in his attitude, and right in his actions and reactions. Look at Jeremiah’s transparency in prayer in verse 18. “Now the Lord gave me knowledge of it, (that is the coming judgment of the Chaldeans coming to destroy Jerusalem) for You showed me their doings.” “But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, ‘Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more.’ I hope that you can see from this, that you and I do not have to be more clever than wicked men. Jeremiah says he was like a docile lamb. He was holy, harmless, and blameless when these men were thinking of taking his life. When dangerous and difficult people come our way and would act out their malice, what are we to do? We are to pray and not to take our own revenge. We may pray that the Lord would take vengeance on them only when it has been proved to us that we should not pray for them any longer. This was what Jeremiah was told to do in verse 14. They would kill the messenger of the Lord, therefore Jeremiah need not pray for them any longer. It does not mean that the Lord could not have sovereignly chosen to save them, even as wicked as they were. But these men were like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day; they were blaspheming the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul sinned in ignorance in his unconverted days. These men sinned with the knowledge that they were willing to blaspheme God’s Spirit. What you and I are to do in days of apostasy, is to “reveal our cause to the Lord”, as it says in verse 20. We pray, “You, Lord, judge righteously my cause”, which is your cause; righteousness, holiness, humility, and the fear of the Lord. We would have His Word regarded by all men. Then we can make request for ourselves – “Search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

