

The Ugliness of Spiritual Adultery

Jeremiah 2:20-3:5

August 13, 2023

Pastor Gary Hollinger

God points out the contradictory nature of His people's words and uses incredibly vivid imagery to describe their sins against Him.

I. God's people had said, "I will not serve you," so, God describes them as... (v. 1-3)

A. Rogue farm animals

Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you."

But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the LORD."

Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

"Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him."

On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

"See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."

(Joshua 24:19-27)

B. As prostitutes.

C. As a vineyard that produces rotten, stinking fruit.

I will sing for the one I love

a song about his vineyard:

My loved one had a vineyard

on a fertile hillside.

He dug it up and cleared it of stones

and planted it with the choicest vines.

He built a watchtower in it

and cut out a winepress as well.

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,

but it yielded only bad fruit.

"Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah,

judge between me and my vineyard.

What more could have been done for my vineyard
than I have done for it?
When I looked for good grapes,
why did it yield only bad?
...The vineyard of the LORD Almighty
is the nation of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are the vines he delighted in. (Isaiah 5:1-4, 7)

II. God's people denied it, but in His eyes they were contaminated by their turning to false gods. (v.22-23a)

It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Hebrews 10:4)

III. God's people's lust pursuit of false Gods contradicts their claims of innocence. (v. 23b-25)

'And you took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and sacrificed them to the idols. (Ezekiel 16:20-21)

You are like a wild donkey, sniffing the wind at mating time. Who can restrain your lust? Those who desire you do not even need to search, for you come running to them! (NLT)

IV. God's people feel no shame for crafting idols to worship, yet they cry out to Him when trouble comes. (v. 26-28)

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this. (Deuteronomy 22:5)

V. God's people perversely complain against Him for their problems, yet they persecuted and killed the prophets He sent to call them back to Him. (v. 29-30)

'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started! (Matthew 23:29-32)

“You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.” (Acts 7:51-53)

VI. God’s people declared their independence from Him even though He had chosen them to be in a covenant relationship. (v. 31)

I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them
and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do;
I will not forsake them.
But those who trust in idols,
who say to images, ‘You are our gods,’
will be turned back in utter shame. (Isaiah 42:16-17)

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Psalm 119:105)

...the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” (Matthew 4:16)

VII. God’s people deny their guilt, yet they had sinned religiously, socially and politically. (v. 33-37)

There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11)

“It is you who have ruined my vineyard;
the plunder from the poor is in your houses.
What do you mean by crushing my people
and grinding the faces of the poor?”
declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty. (Isaiah 3:14b-15)

“If a thief is caught breaking in at night and is struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed... (Exodus 22:2)

VIII. God compares His people to a bride who is unfaithful for a living. (v. 3:1-3)

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her

from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

IX. God's people presume upon His grace. (v. 4-5)

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. (Isaiah 30:15)

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the Lord. (Isaiah 59:20)

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)