

**Jeremiah 2: 1-19; “With God in the Courtroom”, Sermon # 2 in the series**  
**– “Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”,**  
**Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012,**  
**In the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The Lord our God is the righteous judge of all men and nations. He is accountable to no man for His decisions and yet God is concerned that we all see that He is just. In Romans 3 when the Apostle Paul is proving the unbelief and sin of the Jews against God, he asks the question – “What if some did not believe?” “Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?” “Certainly not!” “Indeed let God be true, but every man a liar.” “As it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and may overcome when you are judged.” Is it really possible to put God on trial? And yet this is the picture presented in Romans 3. God is faithful and His faithfulness proceeds from the fact that He is true. This; our God is concerned to prove. And so He is willing to go to court over it. He is willing to settle all disputes with His people. He is willing to settle disputes with all sinners who have come here this afternoon. The Lord is not only Judge, He is also jury because He is perfect in Justice. And yet, here in this passage we see Him take the place of defense attorney on His own behalf, and become a prosecuting attorney toward Israel in order to bring Israel back to Himself and to bring them to repentance. I am hoping that each of us will see that the case of Israel is the case against all of us when we sin and forget our love and responsibility toward God. What is the Lord’s complaint against Israel? The Lord’s case against Israel consists of evidence presented of His own faithfulness and Israel’s unfaithfulness. This court is now in session for this hour, and we will proceed to consider the following items. **Item 1** – God presents, as evidence, a picture of their former love to Him. (verses 1-3) **Item 2** – A time of searching examination of Israel will take place. (verses 4-8) **Item 3** – God brings the charges against Israel. (verses 9-13) **And Item 4** – The Judge gives the Sentence. (verses 14-19)

**Item # 1 – God presents, as evidence, a picture of their former love to Him.**

Some lawyers might come right to the point and skip down to item 3, and state the charges, but our God wants to set the stage. He wants to present a backdrop. So, He says – “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothals”. God is referring to the love that Israel first had for Him after He delivered them from Egypt. I think it refers to Exodus 14: 26-15: 2, if you will turn over there with me. Pharaoh had suffered greatly when God poured out His plagues upon Egypt. And especially when he and all the families of Israel lost their firstborn sons. Pharaoh pursued Israel when they left and would have destroyed them if could have. Look at verse 26 – “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians.’” “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.’” “And Moses stretched out his hand over the

sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it.” “So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.” “Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them.” “Not so much as one of them remained.” “But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and their left.” “So the Lord save Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.” “Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.”

“Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: ‘I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!’ “The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!” “The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” The Lord says, “I remember you.” He remembers your first praises to Him for your deliverance from sin.” He remembers when you first called upon His name and asked penitently for forgiveness. He remembers your joy when you first realized that all of your sins were taken away by the blood of Jesus when you believed the gospel, and He remembers how thankful you were for that deliverance.

*“Long my imprisoned spirit lay; fast bound in sin and nature’s night.” Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I rose the dungeon flamed with light.” “My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose went forth and followed Thee.” (Charles Wesley, Stanza 4, of “And Can it Be”.)*

When we truly see what God has done for us at the cross of Christ; that because of His saving help and His strength of grace, the power of sin is broken forever – we are much in love with God and in admiration of Christ, and we would do anything for Him. This is the “kindness” of our youth, the love of our betrothal to Christ the heavenly Bridegroom. We are joined to the Lord Jesus and are one spirit with Him. (1 Corinthians 6: 17) We say to Him in the spiritual language of Song of Solomon – “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.” “For your love is better than wine.” “Because of the fragrance of your good ointments; Your name is ointment poured forth.” “Therefore the virgins love you.” “Draw me away with you.” “I will run after you.” This is the devotional fire of our hearts. He has poured forth the ointment of His good grace into our hearts and He shows us that we are no longer bound to sin, but we are spiritually espoused to Him. It is the love of our espousals that God remembers. This is holiness to our God; that we can follow Him into a wilderness and know that He will be unto us all that we need. He remembers this first love and presents the picture as evidence that they were the ones who changed. They had moved away from Him, not He from them. Ask yourself now – do I still have this first love – When I could have read His Word all night and prayed to Him in secret often? When I could have spoken to others at any time and place about Him? When

I stayed up half the night to discuss passages of His Word and share them with others because they were burning in my heart? Is all that gone, or the fire of devotion still there? God says, "I remember you."

**Now 2ndly in our Courtroom scene we have a time of intense questioning on the part of God the Prosecuting Attorney.** (verses 4-8)

"Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel." "Thus says the Lord: 'What injustice have your fathers found in Me, that they have gone far from Me?,' He says in verse 5. God is never unjust towards any people, especially His own, but He asks them the question because He knows that they cannot find injustice in Him." Present your case, O Israel, against Me, He says, and see if there was anything that you lacked or anything I would not have done for you. Bitter waters were made sweet at Marah, Manna from heaven given for the whole time of their wandering in the wilderness, water from the rock at Rephidim, victory over their enemies the Amalekites, the pillar of cloud to guide them by day and the pillar of fire by night. But still, they and many of the generations that followed them went far from God; they followed idols and became idolaters. They did not ask this one question, the ultimate question for any church of God's people – "Where is the Lord?" Where is the Lord who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us through a land of deserts and pits, through a land of drought and the shadow of death? Where is He who brought us through a land that no one had crossed before, and where no one dwelt? I think this one question is the most important question to be asked; not only for them, but for the churches today. "Where is the Lord?" When we sin against him, as individuals and as a society, where does He go? When we find our satisfaction in other things, or when we go after our pleasures and do not include Him; what happens; or do we even know, or do we even care? If God's presence were to be taken from us as a church would we know and see a real difference? I am sure that we would; and yet, if there are difficulties, do we ask, "Where is the Lord?"

The Lord does not save men, women, and children so that they can live to themselves. He saves them to live to Him who loved them and gave Himself for them – for His glory they live – and so that He can show them His glory. He saves us so that we might see that He is well able to provide, to protect, to give us everything we need for life and godliness. And He would then have us to proclaim His excellencies, and to show forth His glory. Let me ask you this question personally. What is the Lord doing in your life? I know that there are many things that He is doing, of which you are unaware. But can you think it through? Where is He being seen by you as giving you grace and help to keep His Word? Do you sense His help in areas of your felt weakness? Do you see yourself changing at all by Christ's grace into the Biblical Christian that you desire to be? Examine your life in this way. Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith. Or do you not know that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail the test? I can remember before I knew Christ that I went to a Campus Crusade for Christ meeting where perhaps 30 young college age people met to encourage one another on the University of Iowa campus. One

young man stood up and said to everyone generally, “What is the Lord doing in your life” And I slunk down in my chair, hoping that no one would notice me, or call on me, because I couldn’t think of anything, or perceive anything that the Lord was doing in my life. I thought that I was a Christian, but I was not at that point. Amongst unbelievers and backsliders no one asks, “Where is the Lord?” But in the life of one who is coming to Christ, or the one who would follow Christ, he is often asking this question. Where is the power of conviction of truth in my life; where is His strength of grace seen in my life; where is His illumination upon the truth of the Bible seen in my life, or in the life of our church? Do we really understand these things, experience these things, love these things?

I want to give you a taste of a man who really understood and experienced the power of these things in his heart. David Brainerd in his diary in November of 1743 writes this:

***“Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>:*** *Spent this day in secret fasting and prayer, from morning till night. Early in the morning I had some small degree of assistance in prayer. Afterwards read the story of Elijah the prophet, 1 Kings 17. 18. chapters, and also 2 Kings ch. 2. and 4. chapters. My soul was much moved, observing the faith, zeal, and power of that holy man; how he wrestled with God in prayer, &c. My soul then cried with Elisha, 2Ki. 2:14 ‘Where is the Lord God of Elijah!’ Oh, I longed for more faith! My soul breathed after God, and pleaded with him, that a ‘double portion of that spirit,’ which was given to Elijah, might ‘rest on me.’ And that which was divinely refreshing and strengthening to my soul was, I saw that God is the same that he was in the days of Elijah. Was enabled to wrestle with God by prayer, in a more affectionate, fervent, humble, intense, and importunate manner, than I have for many months past. Nothing seemed too hard for God to perform; nothing too great for me to hope for from him. I had for many months entirely lost all hopes of being made instrumental of doing any special service for God in the world; it has appeared entirely impossible, that one so black and vile should be thus employed for God. But at this time God was pleased to revive this hope. Afterwards read the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Exodus and on to the 20<sup>th</sup>, and saw more of the glory and majesty of God discovered in those chapters, than ever I had seen before; frequently in the mean time falling on my knees, and crying to God for the faith of Moses, and for a manifestation of the divine glory. Especially the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, and part of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> chapters, were unspeakably sweet to my soul: my soul blessed God, that he had shown himself so gracious to his servants of old. The 15<sup>th</sup> chapter seemed to be the very language which my soul uttered to God in the season of my first spiritual comfort, when I had just got through the Red sea, by a way that I had no expectation of. O how my soul then rejoiced in God! And now those things came fresh and lively to my mind; now my soul blessed God afresh, that he had opened that unthought-of way to deliver me from the fear of the Egyptians, when I almost despaired of life. Afterwards read the story of Abraham’s pilgrimage in the land of Canaan: my soul was melted, in observing his faith, bow he leaned on God; how he communed with God, and what a stranger he*

*was here in the world. After that, read the story of Joseph's sufferings, and God's goodness to him: blessed God for these examples of faith and patience. My soul was ardent in prayer, was enabled to wrestle ardently for myself, for Christian friends, and for the church of God. And felt more desire to see the power of God in the conversion of souls, than I have done for a long season. Blessed be God for this season of fasting and prayer! May his goodness always abide with me, and draw my soul to him!"*

God brings us into a bountiful country to eat its fruit and its goodness. But we defile it with our sin, our unbelief, and the idols of our heart. Even the priests in verse 8 of our text, did not say, "Where is the Lord?" What tragedy, what great sin when a pastor or leader does not say, "Where is the Lord, and those who handle the law (that is His Word) do not know Him. How this grieves the heart of God! When we His people walk after things that do not profit and when we do not care and do not ask – Where is the Lord – We are certainly guilty, and we should weep and mourn and cry out to God for mercy that He would return to us a sense of His presence and power to enable us to do His will.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> items we will combine for the sake of time – The charges brought and the sentence given.** (verses 9-19)

"Therefore I will yet bring charges against you says the Lord and against your children's children." These charges are two. (Verse 13) "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." God is the fountain of living waters. Living waters are the picture of God's grace and Spirit; giving His people that sense of peace and blessing in relation to their praying to understand His truth. Psalm 36: 9 says – "For with you is the fountain of life and in Your light we see light." And Jesus says to the woman at the well – "If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you – Give me a drink – You would have asked Him and He would have given you living waters." And verse 14 of John 4 – "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give Him will never thirst." "But the water that I shall give him will become in Him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." This, I say, is the grace, mercy, peace, spiritual life, and the manifold blessings of salvation that God gives, and yet they hewed out cisterns for themselves after they forsook God the fountain of living waters!

A cistern is an artificial reservoir for holding water, especially a tank underground. But these cisterns that people hew out for themselves are broken, they leak, and they fail. So those who thirst will never have life, never have refreshment, never be sustained by their sinful idols or their made-up religions, or their pleasurable entertainments. These all shall fail. And what will be the sentence? If you will not have Jesus, or find your greatest satisfaction in Jesus, then your own iniquities shall correct you, and your own backslidings will rebuke you, as verse 19 says. You will know therefore and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the Lord your God. Let it not be so in your case! Repent of your sins this very day. Do not drink from your broken cisterns which you have made for yourself. Instead

come to the fountain of living waters. Christ gives the water of life, He gives rivers of peace, and showers of blessing. Yes, the Lord has a complaint against you this afternoon if you put other things in His place. But He sent Jesus into this world to satisfy His justice; to have Him pay the penalty and bear the punishment for your sins. If only you will believe, if only you will come to Him and drink of His living waters! God will then slam His gavel down on the bench and declare that even though you are guilty – that His Son has paid the penalty. You are not to be condemned – You shall go free. May this be the day that you come to Jesus! Or if you have drifted back into the world and are living for the things of this world come back to Him again. He will hear your prayers and see your tears, and give you to drink of His pleasures.