

Jeremiah 10: 1-25; “The True God – Incomparable”, Sermon # 10 in the series – “Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 9th, 2013, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

You and I have come here this afternoon to worship the True and Living God, the One who is the Everlasting King of Glory. He is, as our text explicitly declares – Incomparable. Verse 6 says – “There is none like Thee, O Lord.” Whenever we attempt to compare our God to anything, we utterly fail; and in fact we may actually dishonor Him by making comparisons with things we see and understand. God is great and His Name is great in might. He is infinite in His Being, and so all comparison is out of the question. The Scriptures everywhere assert that you and I are to love and to adore this great God because He is Holy. He is infinitely wise, He is incomprehensibly great in His attributes and perfections; and He should be regarded so, by us, His creatures. We simply find Him to be unique; separate, and in a category all His own. This makes all attempts of men to represent God to himself and others, by a religion of their own making, apart from the revelation of the Scriptures, a sinful blaspheme which leads to idolatry. So to worship the false gods that men make is futile, and it is work deserving of His wrath; but the worship of the true God gives God what is rightfully due to Him, and it directs our steps to a holy life, so that we might have an everlasting inheritance in the end. The question that I want to bring to your attention this afternoon is this: Why should I see the true God as Incomparable? And there are 3 answers from this chapter which give us the answer.

1st – The True God is Incomparable (He alone is to be worshiped) because false gods (all other gods) are made by men. (verses 1-9)

Idolatry is a sin which takes in the 1st and 2nd commandments given to us in God’s Holy law; that of having no other gods before Him and making of any graven image or likeness of God; whether it is anything on the earth, to the heavens above, or the waters of the sea. The 1st commandment relates to Who it is, who alone is to be worshipped. The 2nd relates to how He is not to be worshipped. The reason that we should not worship others gods is because our God is a jealous God. The reason why we ought always and alone to worship and serve the true God is because He is incomparable in every respect in regard to His Being. “Thou art Great and Great is Thy Name in might.” (verse 6) Men are prone, without the knowledge of the true and living God, to make many gods, and put many things in the place of God, so as to give them the glory, the attention, and the love of their hearts that belongs to God alone. But this is all vanity and futility. There are several descriptions of idolatry in our passage which are mentioned. The 1st is in verse 2. “Do not learn the way of the Gentiles.” “Do not be dismayed by the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed by them.” The Chaldeans and the

Egyptians and many others nations around the nation of Israel were addicted to astrology. They thought that all true science flowed from their observations on the moon and the stars and the sun. They thought that many things either bad or good would happen when the moon was in a certain phase in relation to the stars; or when Jupiter was aligned with Mars, or when the sun was in eclipse. And they prognosticated, or forecast many things related to the fate of men or nations by the use of this kind of superstition. Those who do not know God are dismayed by them. If we think for a moment that this form of idolatry does not exist in our day as well, we are very uninformed.

Many people in our day still check the newspapers for the sign of the Zodiac under which month of the year they were born, to see what kind of a person they are like, or what will happen to them today, or in the days to come. Is God's will to be found in the stars? Are you and I to seek for signs and indications of what will happen to us in the future, rather than trusting in God and His word? Turn over to Isaiah 47: 12 with me. "Stand now with your enchantments and the multitude of your sorceries, in which you have labored from your youth—perhaps you will be able to profit, perhaps you will prevail, you are wearied in the multitude of your counsels: let now the astrologers, the stargazers, and the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from what shall come upon you." "Behold they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame; it shall not be a coal to be warmed by, nor a fire to sit before!" Thus shall they be to you with whom you have labored, your merchants from your youth; they wander each one to his quarter." "No one shall save you." Turn also over to Isaiah 8, verse 19. "And when they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter, should not a people seek their God?' "Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?" "To the law and to the testimony!" "If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We as Christians should never believe in good luck or bad luck. All things in the future for you, are in the hands of God. Even Satan, and wicked men, can do nothing against you unless God gives them permission. And if He does, He will give you the fullness of His Spirit to not only bear it, but grace to triumph in the midst of it, to the glory of God. This is the mindset that we must consciously cultivate.

Neither should we believe that the counsels of false religion will make us secure. People who do not know God may be deceived into thinking that astrology and false religion can direct them, but you and I ought to be able to say that our God is incomparably greater than even the greatest and most beautiful and most awesome things that He has made. It is the customs of the people around us that are futile. They will, by their customs, attempt to supplant the place of God Himself, with all of their additions to His Holy Word and their revisions of His glorious attributes. These obscure the truth about God; the truth which would save them from their sins and bring them into His everlasting favor, if they would

only believe it. The way that men supplant God with their idols is also indicated from our text. Verses 3-5 show us that they decorate up the work of men's hands with silver and gold. Idolatry is often based upon physical beauty, earthly beauty, or the beauty of things created by men. But God had something to say to them then, and He has something to say to us today. Idols do not have life; they do not have power, they cannot speak, they must be carried. Skillful men have made them; but their wooden idol is a worthless doctrine. Even the wisest men among the nations and all of their kingdoms are dull hearted and foolish when compared with our living eternal Lord.

The 1st Lesson, for us here this afternoon, is clear. We are not to be afraid of men's idols. They are powerless. They cannot do good or evil as it says in verse 5. But what we must fear is that we ourselves have an idol or idols which we will not give up. Is it material wealth (the beauty and pleasure that money can buy)? Is it that which holds us, or is it sensual pleasure; is it worldly wisdom, is it the inordinate love of fun and games which leaves no time or heart left for secret devotion to God? Is it a love for ourselves, our ease and comfort and convenience that will not give way to self-denial and a giving, loving, faithful consideration of others and their needs? Do we live to and for ourselves, or to and for God and the Lord Jesus? Because all of the gods that we make shall perish from the earth and under these heavens. And at His wrath the earth will tremble and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation. (verse 10) Do we realize that our idols make God angry because He is a jealous God who would have the pre-eminent place in our lives?

2nd – The True God is Incomparable because He made all things and rules over them sovereignly. (verse 10)

“But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King.” “At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.” Man has the power of arrangement. Man has the power to build things and make things which he is then prone to worship. But man does not technically or really have the ability to create anything. The only creativity he has, is in his being a good steward of what God has given him; whether it is in a mental skill or a physical skill. Man cannot create life, he cannot make DNA; he cannot do anything but arrange, rearrange, or build upon what God has already given him. God has made the earth by His power; He established the earth by His wisdom. He brought order and beauty and law to the formless and void lump of earth that He spoke into existence. He took counsel with no man, He asked no advice of any angel. That which He created, that which He has made by design and purpose and function, could never have been formed by random chance or the fiction of evolution. It required infinite wisdom and measureless power and intricate involvement in the smallest details to execute a design so grand as what we behold when we step out of this building. It was His sovereign discretion that stretched out the heavens. It is He who puts El Nino in the ocean and causes vapors to

ascend from the ends of the earth. It is He who utters His voice and there is a multitude of waters in the heavens. It is He who makes the lightening for the rain, when a cold air mass meets a warm one; when He thunders marvelously with His voice. It is He who directs the winds so carefully in the midst of a tornado that every particular of whether people or animals die, or property is destroyed. You must not believe that it is random chance, for God orders all things after the counsel of His will. God is not only the Maker of all things, but He is the Governor and Preserver of them as well. He is the Maker of all things and the Portion of Jacob – the portion of His people. Can you confess that He is your portion this afternoon; that whatever happens in storms or floods that you belong to Him?

I sing the Almighty power of God that made the mountains rise, that spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies. I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day. The moon shines full at His command and all the stars obey. I sing the goodness of the Lord that filled the earth with food. He formed the creatures at His word, and then pronounced them good. Lord how Thy wonders are displayed where'er I turn my eye: If I survey the ground I tread or gaze upon the sky. There's not a plant or flower below, but makes Thy glories known. And clouds arise and tempests blow by order from Thy Throne; while all that borrows life from Thee is ever in Thy care, and everywhere that man can be, Thou God are present there. – Isaac Watts

If God created all things, and upholds and governs all things, then can He not recreate fallen men and women and children, through Jesus Christ our Lord? If He breathed into Adam the breath of life; breathed into the clay of his body which He had fashioned into the shape of a man, can He not breathe life into your soul by the power of His Holy Spirit, and cause you to be born again to a living hope? And after He has done that great work of regeneration, will He not be faithful to sustain you day by day and give comfort and encouragement to your fainting soul in the day of trial? You know, some men like to think that they receive Christ in the sacrament of the Mass. They call it transubstantiation. A priest who says words over a wafer, thinks that he is changing it into a god. But God has not given such power to man. His molded image is falsehood; it is futile—a work of errors. Thousand are misled even to hell because of it. But our God is so very great that He had only to sacrifice His Son once, and it was enough. By this one sacrifice He has put away sins in the person of His Son. He has dealt with the sin of all who believe in Him. He is raised from the dead and is not to be seen as presently on a crucifix. Oh, the love and Person of Christ are incomparable. If he does not repent, the work of a priest will utterly fail and be punished forever, because he thought that he could create and sacrifice Christ. How dull-hearted and without knowledge is the one who thinks he can make his own Christ, or find favor with God by his works.

This brings us finally to the 3rd and last reason that our God is Incomparable – It is because He alone can guide us. (verse 23)

“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself.” “It is not in a man who walks to direct his steps.” Our God is not only sovereign over creation, but He is also providentially ordering all the direction and guidance which His people need, and is sovereign in the rise and fall of nations as well. Because the nation of Israel had sinned and provoked God for so long a time, He was about to take them on a long and sad journey into captivity. He was about to sling out, like a stone from a sling, the inhabitants of the land. And Jeremiah is distraught, and thus he turns himself to prayer. He sees that captivity is coming and that society as he had known it was coming to an end. There was no one to help to even set up the tents of the Old Testament church. Jeremiah pictures it as his own tent, and that all the cords which hold it up were broken. And the shepherds and pastors of that flock had become dull-hearted: they did not pray or intercede for the good of that people any longer. All of their flocks would be scattered—for judgment had come. What would Jeremiah do? What would you do? He would not, and he did not run away from this situation. He prayed and enunciated this great principle of truth—O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in the man who walks to direct his own steps. You and I, dear Christian, need to be guided by God Himself, or He would never have had Jeremiah pen these words. God would have you to submit to His truth, revealed to you in the Word, and not look for answers from your feelings or your own impulsive thoughts of escaping difficulties. He would have you submit to Him and interact with Him in all of His providential leading in your life, with regard to His discipline and judgments. You should not be trying to direct yourself in all the great matters over the course of your life. You should be looking to God in prayer. You should let His Word direct you, and His Spirit lead you.

It is perfectly legitimate to pray, as Jeremiah did, “O Lord, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing. Remember that God is your Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. He will lead you by His good Spirit on level ground. Listen to Psalm 143: 10 – “Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good.” “Lead me in the land of uprightness.” “Revive me, O Lord, for Your name’s sake!” “For your righteousness sake bring me out of trouble.” Let me ask if you pray this way, or whether you will begin to pray this way? For God is leading you and guiding you, dear Christian, whether you know it or not. You and your family should call upon the Lord. You are not like the heathen. Verse 25 says, “Pour out Your fury on the Gentiles, who do not know You, and on the families who do not call on Your name...” Begin to show today, O you heads of households, that you are different from those who do not know God; begin to have family worship. Set up the family altar and begin to lead them in prayer, dear fathers. You say, “Yes, but there are so many difficulties in doing that in consistency.” Yes it is so, but will you not try? The Apostle Paul says, “I am well

content with difficulties, distresses, reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, for Christ's sake." "For when I am weak, then I am strong." Have you learned this wonderful, but powerful lesson, dear Christian?

In closing let me ask this question of all who are here: What do you do when things in life do not work out the way that you want them to be? Do you stay the course and do God's will, or do you run away? Jeremiah would be faithful to the Lord's direction of his life. What about you and me? The strength to stay the course and do what is right comes not from ourselves, but our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. God has appointed Him Head over all things to His New Testament Church. He will direct you by His Word and Spirit to a renewed obedience to do His will; to prove that it is good and acceptable and perfect. You do not need to be conformed to this world to be truly happy. The Lord will guide and direct you, by His good Spirit, all the way through this world, all the way to the gates of heaven, and let you in there because you have trusted in Him all the way. I know, O Lord the way of man is not in himself; but it is in You to direct my steps. Truly our God is incomparable.