

Remember that Jeremiah lived 3 miles outside of Jerusalem, in a little town.

Here in chapter 2, God told Jeremiah to talk that 3 mile walk, and bring a message. Let's hear the story as Jeremiah tells it, beginning in verse 1, "*The Word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD...'*"

Take a guess. You know God from the Bible, right?

God loves His people, right? Yes, right. We teach the children to sing Jesus Loves me, this I know.

Here is a question. Did the people love God back?

Let me ask you - God loves you, right? Do you love God back?

God is faithful, right? We can trust God, right? So do you? Do we trust God?

The title of my message is "In God we USED TO Trust" because we have the same problem that the people of Judah had in Jeremiah's lifetime. We used to trust God. That is the main point of this sermon: **God showed how the people of Judah used to trust in God.**

We will see that main idea unfold in 3 sub-points. 1. Turning away from God toward worthless idols. (v.1-19) 2. Becoming fascinated by other gods. (v.20-28) 3. Refusing to acknowledge their guilt. (v.29-37)

1. Turning away from God toward worthless idols. (v.1-19)

Back to our story. God told Jeremiah to take that walk to Jerusalem that day. This was the first day of Jeremiah speaking as the brand-new prophet of God. What will God give Jeremiah to say to the people on the first day, the first prophetic message?

Ready?

Verse 2, "...*Thus says the LORD, 'I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.'*"

We can reflect back today on what happened 245 years ago, to start our country. A married person can reflect back on what it was like in the early years of marriage. The message God gave to Jeremiah to bring as the first message to Jerusalem was God reflecting back on the start of His relationship to His people, much like a broken-hearted spouse will reflect back on the early days of the marriage. God is heart-broken. God remembers the former love of His bride!

The word "Love" in "your love as a bride" is the word HESED – the covenant love of God. Contract love. Committed love. And it is being described

here as the love of the people for God! It was a relationship of faithfulness to and adoration of God.

The people of God gave their hearts to God, like a new young bride gives her heart to her husband. Just married. First married. In love. Romance. Following. Trusting. Submitting. Desiring to be close.

The people were the loving bride.

God was the perfect groom, and God was the faithful husband. God cherished His people. God treated His people with honor and respect. The Bride of God was the apple of God's eye, and God's best and most valuable possession. God kept his wife safe from all attackers, whether it be Egypt or the Philistines.

God provided for his wife – a beautiful home, plenty of food, a life and land flowing with milk and honey.

The measure of their loyalty and devotion to God in those early days was that they followed God. They ventured into the wilderness, an open area that had never been tilled. This was in contrast to what they had known in Egypt with its finely-tilled lands and abundant crops. Strong confidence in the LORD led the people to follow Him into such unfamiliar places. The people trusted God that deeply. In God they trusted.

It is similar for our nation's history. American founders had such trust in God that they risked starting our own country in order to have the freedom to worship. And now, do we worship God? Do we uphold the ethical standard of God? Many in this country are not following God anymore. Many in this country are not trusting in God anymore.

God went on in verse 3, to describe His care for His bride in terms of a farmer describing his vegetables and fruits. Verse 3 pictures a harvest festival, and the people themselves are the firstfruits. God has shown us in an agricultural analogy, and it is another way of communicating God's love and care. The people trusted, and God protected them.

In the paragraph of verses 4-8 – we suddenly fast forward FROM the time when the people trusted God in the wilderness, TO the time when the people were settled securely into the land of promise. Physically, they were settled in the land, but spiritually, they were ready to wander.

Verse 4, Jeremiah tells them to listen, because this is a message from God.

In verse 5, God asked a tough and pointed question, "...*thus says the LORD: 'What wrong did your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless.'*"

God's people used to love and adore God, but now it is all different.

We Christians today read their sad story and we shake our heads and ask, 'Why would anyone ever wander from God?' It makes no sense!

The people of God forgot God!

What went wrong? How did they get here?

Look where Jeremiah begins in diagnosing the problem – on the spiritual leaders. Why didn't the spiritual leaders sound the alarm? Jeremiah 2:8, "*The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' Whose who handle the law did not know Me; the shepherds transgressed against Me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit.*"

The priests, the Bible teachers, the pastors and elders did not do their job. Their job was to bring people back to The LORD. But the spiritual leaders did not challenge the people. They did not ask where God was in the life of the nation.

No one was part of the solution – not the prophets, not the priests, not the kings. Leading wayward people back to God, that is what makes a spiritual leader.

So, in verse 9, God is suddenly looking at things from heaven to earth, and saying, "*I...contend with you.*" God is filing for divorce, but not in order to punish and separate, but rather in order to get back His bride, His people. How do we know? Because God said in verse 9, "*and with your children's children I will contend.*" God is fighting FOR His marriage to His people by suing for a divorce.

The first bone of contention that God says is that the people did something that no other countries have done. They changed gods. None of those nations listed in verse 10 have changed gods, but Israel did. In verse 11, what did the people gain? Nothing. In verse 12, God had called on the heavens to be shocked at this. Who would do this? What is so shocking about this? God gave an illustration in verse 13. Forsaking God is like living in the desert, but not having to worry about water because you live with a natural spring of water on your property, so you have built a whole farm there and life is good. But you forsake it. Yes, one day you decide to leave that farm and build your own underground cisterns for water. The problem is that your hard work building cisterns is useless because the tank leaked. Now you are living in the desert with no water at all. That is the illustration. That is what is so shocking about this.

Next we see the result. The people now are living the dangerous unprotected life of a slave (v.14), which is depicted bleakly and accurately in verse 15 as lions roaring against them, and making their land a waste, and destroying their cities, and in verse 16, their new slavemaster Egypt has shaved their heads.

In verses 17-19 God returned to water imagery again. In order to get a drink of water, must God's people travel to the Nile River down in Egypt? Or to Assyria to drink from the Euphrates River? Verse 19 summarizes these choices by saying "*...it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God...*"

2. Becoming fascinated by other gods. (v.20-28)

God continues to mount the evidence why God could divorce them.

These verses read like we are in a courtroom, and God is the prosecuting attorney, giving a slide show of evidence against the people. So, God seems to

quickly cycle through exhibits of what it is like for the people not to trust God, but to become fascinated by other gods. It is like Exhibit A – you are like a bride becoming a prostitute (v.20), Exhibit B – you are like a choice vine carefully cultivated in the vineyard that is now reverted to wild, and so is producing useless grapes (v.21), Exhibit C – you are like a person washing with various soaps that fail to wash away sin (v.22), Exhibit D – you are like a camel that runs amok, not taking more than 3 steps in the same direction before circling around again (v.23), Exhibit E – you are like a wild donkey’s passion to indulge itself (v.24), and Exhibit F – you are like an addict who denies the possibility of rehab (v.25). Yet another scene in verse 26, God shows the people not trusting God anymore is like a thief caught red-handed, and all of the leaders will be shamed – their kings, officials, priests and prophets.

When God is removed from everything, everything becomes permissible, such as in our day, the killing of the unborn and the neglect of the poor.

What else happens when God is removed? The confusion of the people is one result that is obvious. They are so caught up in sin, that they cannot think straight. Here God seems to take quotes from the people, and bring them to light in the courtroom in order to show that their defense of themselves will not stand up in the courtroom of God. In verse 20, they declare their rejection of God and their covenant obligations to God, when they boldly declare to God, “*I will not serve you.*” But then in verse 23, they claim that they are not breaking the covenant by going after other gods, when they say, “*I am not unclean, I have not gone after the Baals (false gods)*” Next we hear how what they had denied in verse 23, they now admit in verse 25, when they say, “*It is hopeless, for I have loved foreigners, and after them I will go.*” In verse 27 they even confuse gender within their false worship. To a tree, which is the feminine goddess represented by the wood, they say, You are my father, but to the stone, which was the masculine god, they say, you gave me birth! Failing to trust God brings confusion about the things of God, the things of the world, and even about their own false religious beliefs! But what is really fascinating about verse 27, is God’s insight into what happens next to further expose their confusion. Let me read from verse 27, starting in the middle of the verse, “*...they have turned their back to Me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, ‘Arise and save us!’*” When their mixed-gender worship of false non-existent gods does not provide the blessings that they were seeking, everything fell apart, and so they ask God to help them. God would be glad to help them, but they won’t change gods. Verse 28 ends this section with God confronting them about their insane attachment to the false gods, despite the problems it causes. Listen to verse 28, this is God answering the people, who asked God to save them, “*But where are your gods, that you made for yourself? Let them*

arise, if they can save you, in your time of trouble; for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah.”

The people were not repenting and coming back to God. If they were, then God would save them. But the people were not repenting. They remained fascinated with false gods. They can say in verse 25 that it is *hopeless*, that they will go after other gods compulsively, without self-control. But then they will say in verse 35, *“I am innocent, surely [God’s] anger has turned from me.”* This is the behavior and mindset of an addict. One minute, the addict says I cannot help it, and the next minute the addict says, God cannot hold me accountable for this, because I cannot help it! What does God say in response to the addicts, both ancient and modern? Verse 35, *“Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying, ‘I have not sinned.’”*

The key to coming out of our addictions is repentance. Repentance starts with saying, I have sinned. What was it that the Fonz could never say? I was wrrr.. I was wrrr.. I was wrong.

I was wrong are some of the hardest words for anyone to say.

Repentance is required for us to leave idols and return to God.

I was wrong to trust the idols, and now I turn around and trust God alone.

The issue that these verses bring out is that this addiction and this idolatry came to characterize the whole community in Jerusalem. Thus God sent Jeremiah to confront the idolatry, and cut through the confusion. God is not confused. It is very simple. It is idolatry, and the only way out is repentance. Will they repent?

3. Refusing to acknowledge their guilt. (v.29-37)

Verse 29 is legal language - literal courtroom language – contend = bringing charges or filing a lawsuit. Back in verse 9, it was God bringing charges to file for divorce, and God was doing that to persuade them to return to God. How do the people respond?

Well, here in verse 29, the people still do not repent. Instead, the people bring a counter-suit, counter-charges against God! That is not the attitude of contrition and humility, but rather an argumentative attitude. The people were being immature, combative, and retaliatory! That reveals more guilt!

Let me explain the form of verses 30 – 35. In ancient times, kings of big empires were overlords of kings of small areas. So, God is the king with a large empire, presenting to the smaller king, a case of displeasure and grievances. Basically, the overlord would confront the smaller king, ask questions with implied accusations, talk about the previous benefits of the contract, how the lesser king broke the contract, how the offenses cannot be repaid, and a threat of judgment. So, we can see this in verses 30-35. Verse 30, they killed the messengers (which was God’s prophets) in verse 31, God did not mistreat them, so why are they trying to spin it that way? In verse 32, every bride remembers her dress and how she wore her hair, but the people of God forgot God their spiritual husband. There was no

longer any love and trust for God in their hearts. In verse 33, they were so spiritually promiscuous, that they could have taught a class for harlots. In verse 34, there is evidence of their guilt in oppressing the poor, and in verse 35, while they still claim innocence, God's verdict is that they are guilty. This follows the pattern of ancient kings addressing acts of rebellion by the lesser kings.

The chapter ends with verses 36 and 37 showing that repentance is absolutely necessary. "*The LORD has rejected those in whom you trust...*" The idols were not acceptable to God. But remarkably the chapter ends showing that the way toward repentance still remained open. The pathway was still open for turning from their sin. Punishment was avoidable. The tone here was a tone of warning, not a tone of announcement of certain doom.

As we wind down now and consider chapter 2 as a whole, we realize that the salvation of God is a romance. God loves us like a husband loves his wife. The question to us is – do we love God like a newlywed, or have we been looking for love in all the wrong places? Not trusting God has been described in this chapter a lot of different ways – changing gods, trying to get water from a broken water cistern, or sleeping around with false gods, and the sin is the same. Not trusting God.

What is God going to do with us? We don't trust God like we used to trust God. What now?

Will God go through with the divorce of us, His bride, His people?

No. God will never stop loving us. God does not break His covenant with us.

If you have never entered a relationship with God of love and care, then God is courting you now. Trust God, because He will never let you go.

If you have entered a love relationship with God, then ask yourself if you still love God as much today as you did at first? If you are not passionately in love with God right now, you are spiritually behaving like the camels or donkeys of this chapter. But God your husband still wants you back.

The gospel is that God will not just take you back. That is done in human situations. What is divine about this is that God will take you back AND restore your spiritual purity. God will restore us.

Jeremiah wrote about this later in Jeremiah 31:3-4, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel!*"

To have God still consider us His bride is wonderful, but not the best part.

God's cleansing is so complete that He restores us to our purity and passion for God.

How does God do that? Verse 22 told us that washing ourselves with various detergents left us guilty before the LORD. What detergent can wash away our stain of guilt? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Our divine husband needs to die for us, in order to keep us as His own. This He did.

Ephesians 5:25-27, “...*Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*”

Jesus Christ, our Savior Himself, came into this world for the express purpose of retaining us as the people of God, His bride. In order to keep us, Jesus needed to take on human body, which provided Him the ability to die. He died on that cross to remove our spiritual promiscuity and to restore the virginity of His spiritual bride. We can trust Him again, like we used to do!

Conclusion: Once again, believe in God like you used to.

Do you believe that all blessings come through taking our country back to its Christian roots through political power? That is a spiritual trap of idolatry.

The liberal church in America got involved in politics, and so the church declined. The conservative church in America, if it aligns itself with a political agenda, will fall into the same trap. The quest for political power destroys our spiritual influence. What should we do? First, we get back to trusting God ourselves. Second, we equip Christians to bring the light of God’s Word to all the issues in our lives and in our nation. We can rebuild any nation, if we believe in God and His ethic.

We must avoid trusting in ourselves, in our spouses, in our families, or our ethnic group, in our church denomination, our political allies, or our state or national government. The lesson of Jeremiah 2 is to avoid trusting in any human leaders for your personal sense of stability. Trust God alone.

Why should we trust God?

Quick list.

- God redeemed His people out of Egypt
- God guided them in the wilderness
- God provided for all of their needs
- God gave them the land, flowing with milk and honey
- God blessed them with abundance and fruitfulness

We can add to the list since the days of Jeremiah. Consider what blessings we have today. Why should we trust God?

-in our historical Christian faith, we share the same list with ancient believers

-PLUS, we have the life, death, resurrection of Christ, and our salvation in Him.

- we have the New Testament and the New Testament church

- we have the last 2,000 years of rich building of Christian faith, worship, study, and writings

- we have the vast resources of Christian Bibles of various translations, Christian books, articles, websites, sermons, seminars, and resources.

- we have a country that still protects freedom of worship and religion

- we take inventory in our personal lives of God's many blessings to us.

- we have the opportunity to use our many blessings to re-invest in the kingdom of God, including our time and talents.

Why is it that Bible knowledge and Bible reading has startlingly gone down?

God has given us so much, what are we doing with it – where are we serving Him? Where is our trusting of God bearing fruit for His kingdom? In what ways are we being salt and light? How sacrificially are we supporting missionaries?

How consistently have you trusted in God throughout your life?

I remember, says God, as He flips back through the photo album of our early walk with God. We are not as close to God as we once were. God expresses divine nostalgia. God remembers the good old days. We started out following God, our covenant husband, and trusting Him to protect and to provide. But then, when we start through the wilderness, we developed patterns of repeated grumbling, and even outright rebellion against our God.

We used to sing with gusto. We used to pray that since all of our money possessions and skills belong to God, that however He wants us to use them, we will use them. Now we have an attitude. Now we have demands.

Jeremiah 31:31-34, *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the*

greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Remember how God sent Jeremiah to walk 3 miles to Jerusalem with a message? How does that story end for Jerusalem, thanks to the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Revelation 21:2, *“And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, ..., prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

Revelation 21:9, *“Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”*

No matter what you are facing, **Once again, believe in God like you used to.**