

“The Indictment”

We have been learning a great deal about Jeremiah and the Office of Prophet in the Old Testament. Today we are going to begin to look at the message the God wants to deliver to Judah, the Southern Nation. Remember that about 100 years prior to this God used the Assyrian to punish and destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Assyria tried to invade Southern Judah but God prevented it. It was to be a warning to Judah but they took it as a promise of protection from God. They thought that no matter what they did God had to protect them because of His covenant with Abraham and Moses.

The imagery that God will use throughout Jeremiah's book is one of God as the husband and His people as His wife.

As a whole, this unit serves to set up the metaphor of Jerusalem/ Israel as the bride of the Lord. This metaphor is used throughout this section and the next as the primary metaphor for explaining the Lord's plans to bring destruction on Jerusalem. He is acting as a husband whose wife has been unfaithful to him. She has shamed her husband, and he responds to assert and restore his own honor.

Jeremiah has inherited this metaphor from Hosea. In the metaphor, the Lord and his bride are married at Mount Sinai with the establishment of the Mosaic covenant. The “honeymoon” comes in the sojourn in the wilderness, when the Lord says they followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. Both Hosea and Jeremiah describe this as a time when Israel loved the Lord deeply. No reference is made to complaining or rebellion; Israel relied on the Lord for her survival.

In the second and third chapters of Jeremiah, the Lord brings charges against his unfaithful wife. In fact, the whole unit seems to borrow from the language of the courtroom. It begins as a plaintiff would begin when addressing those he is accusing: Hear the word.... In other words, “Listen to the accusations being made.”

At the transition in verse 9, the Lord twice uses the term רִיב (rîb), which is a term that carries the specifically legal sense of “file a lawsuit.” This genre of “covenant lawsuit” is fairly common among the Hebrew prophets.

Jeremiah 2:9 (ESV) 9 “Therefore I still contend with you, declares the Lord, and with your children's children I will contend.

Basically God is saying...these are the charges and I am formally charging you in a Covenant Lawsuit.

There are two sides to the central thought of this unit.

First, the Lord defends his own actions toward Israel, showing how he has acted as a good husband would act toward his wife.

He is guilty of no fault that might explain her own shameful actions. The natural thing for the Israelites to do would be to call to mind how the Lord had delivered them from Egypt, cared for them in the wilderness, and provided a home for them. Then, they can be expected to respond with gratitude and praise, with justice and righteousness.

They should be asking the question, "Where is the Lord?". This is not a question of doubt, but a reminder. Each generation has been searching for a god who will protect them and provide for them, and the question would remind them of how the Lord had provided for them in the past. But no one asks the question.

This points to the other side to this unit, namely, how the people have repeatedly responded unnaturally. They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. The Lord had carried them through a place of desolation and death into a place of fruitfulness and life. They received the gift of a fruitful and rich land by ruining it, spoiling it, defiling it with idols. They had turned to things that give no profit, worthless idols, in their attempts to make a profit.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that those specifically entrusted with reminding the people of what the Lord has done for them lead the way in forgetting or ignoring the Lord. The priests, who should have been leading the people in asking, "Where is the Lord?" do not ask the question.

The legal experts (scribes) do not know the Lord, meaning they do not uphold (or maybe even consult) his teachings in giving their opinions on legal questions

The leaders ("shepherds") have rebelled, when they should be the ones putting down rebellions. And the Lord's own prophets have deserted him and are prophesying on behalf of Baal. Instead of "going" where the Lord sends them, they are following ("going after") worthless idols.

The formal indictment the Lord brings is essentially one charge, but it is expressed in two ways. First, he challenges his audience to name any other nation that has been unfaithful to its gods the way Israel has been unfaithful to the Lord. None can be named. What makes this all the more tragic is Israel is the only nation whose God is real; yet they are the only nation to "trade in" their God for another. Their God possesses Glory, yet they have put their faith in things that cannot profit, things that are worthless. So what Israel has done is not typical, even for nations who would have more reason to do it.

The Lord then reinforces this indictment with a metaphor, comparing himself to a spring of living water and the other gods to broken cisterns. This would have been a very vivid metaphor for the people living in that semiarid region of the world where water was a primary and perennial concern. Settlements naturally sprang up there around springs because they could provide water year-round.

Cisterns were dug and lined with limestone to supplement the natural water supply. They worked by catching the runoff from the seasonal rains and holding it during the long, dry months. But they could only hold enough to last for one dry season, and they were much more likely to become contaminated than springs. Moreover

Moreover, the "cisterns" (gods) to whom the Israelites were turning for spiritual sustenance were broken; any nourishment they might have provided had seeped out, leaving the people with nothing. Yet the people continued to rely on them. Again, this is totally unnatural and irrational.

Each of the ways in which this charge is expressed carries with it a sense of incredulity. Who would have thought such a situation would develop? No one. This is completely unexpected, unnatural. But before we get too judgemental....He is describing us as well.

And yet, we see people doing the same sort of thing today. We assume and look for "natural" and "logical" explanations for our successes and failures, rather than acknowledging the One who controls the fates of all. We yearn for answers to complex issues, resolutions to disagreements, the elimination of physical pain. But we too have cisterns...we look for answers from sources which cannot provide what we need. We turn to man-made chemicals and self-help schemes and shortsighted solutions, instead of looking to "the spring of living water".

Also, rather than looking to God to help them...they blame God for all that is happening to them.

The people feel that their "father" has forsaken them, but he states and then reiterates that it is they who are forsaking the Lord your God. Once they saw Babylon gain world power, they turned to the Egyptians and Assyrians for protection rather than God. They are looking to Egypt and Assyria for economic aid or military assistance against the Babylonians. Worse, they have taken on the gods and worship practices of those nations.

The suffering which the people now face is a clear example of a bad decision coming back to haunt them. They have turned to other nations and their gods looking for help, but it is those nations who have let them down, in fact, who have turned against them and hurt them. They have forsaken the Lord, and so he has allowed them to suffer the consequences of that decision. They are experiencing the bitter taste of the fruits of their actions. God will punish unrepentant sin both in His followers and in those who follow themselves.

The troubles that he is bringing on them evoke complaints; his people bring charges against him, as if he has broken his promises to them. The truth is, they have rebelled against him, and he is justified in bringing charges against them. And it is not as if they were caught off guard by his acts of punishment. He had sent prophets earlier who warned them to repent of their evil ways, but they had devoured [those] prophets like a ravening lion. He had struck them in vain ...; they did not respond to correction.

God fills this text with metaphors and images. It is as if one picture is not enough to fully show what has happened.

The people are servants of the Lord who have broken his yoke and removed their bonds in order to serve another master; they have prostituted themselves on every high hill ...; they are a choice vine that has become a wild vine; they are soiled with a stain that cannot be removed; they are like a swift she-camel or a wild donkey ... in her heat that cannot be restrained; they are disgraced like a thief ... when he is caught

The unsubmitive servant conveys some dimensions of the problem; but the prostituting wife suggests others, the wild vine even more, and on and on it goes. Their sin is enduring and pervasive. For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah. This is not something which has developed recently which the Lord is seeking to eradicate swiftly, but something which he has witnessed for many years and is willing to tolerate no longer.

He should have been treated as most precious, guarded and cherished like a woman's husband; yet she has treated him like some cheap trinket, placed in the back of some drawer and forgotten. She has failed miserably as a wife, but she has excelled as a prostitute. How skilled you are at pursuing love! She is the expert; she has "written the book" on how to be promiscuous. She is the one who will be interviewed on the TV talk shows to give the most sought after advice regarding this topic, because even the worst of women can learn from your ways.

Then He responds to the fact that they declare their innocence. They see the signs of God's anger, and they hear the accusations of wrong leveled by Jeremiah and other prophets; but they refuse to accept that the Lord has any justifiable reason to be angry with them. The devastation they see around them must have some other explanation

It is an important part of the picture, though, because it shows that the people had ample warnings and ample time to change their ways. It is not because they occasionally sinned that God decides to destroy their land and exile them, but because they persist in their sins after having been corrected and warned by him.

Read Jeremiah Chapter 2-3:5

Jeremiah 2:1-3 (ESV) 1 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2 "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, 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. 3 Israel was holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the Lord."

Jeremiah 2:4-6 (ESV) 4 Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. 5 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? 6 They did not say, 'Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells?'

Jeremiah 2:7-8 (ESV) 7 And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination. 8 The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' Those 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.

Jeremiah 2:9-13 (ESV) 9 "Therefore I still contend with you, declares the Lord, and with your children's children I will contend. 10 For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing. 11 Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. 12 Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, 13 for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Jeremiah 2:14-17 (ESV) 14 "Is Israel a slave? Is he a homeborn servant? Why then has he become a prey? 15 The lions have roared against him; they have roared loudly. They have made his land a waste; his cities are in ruins, without inhabitant. 16 Moreover, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes have shaved the crown of your head. 17 Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the Lord your God, when he led you in the way?

Jeremiah 2:18–19 (ESV) 18 And now what do you gain by going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates? 19 Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord God of hosts.

Jeremiah 2:20–22 (ESV) 20 “For long ago I broke your yoke and burst your bonds; but you said, ‘I will not serve.’ Yes, on every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down like a whore. 21 Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine? 22 Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, declares the Lord God.

Jeremiah 2:23–25 (ESV) 23 How can you say, ‘I am not unclean, I have not gone after the Baals’? Look at your way in the valley; know what you have done— a restless young camel running here and there, 24 a wild donkey used to the wilderness, in her heat sniffing the wind! Who can restrain her lust? None who seek her need weary themselves; in her month they will find her. 25 Keep your feet from going unshod and your throat from thirst. But you said, ‘It is hopeless, for I have loved foreigners, and after them I will go.’

Jeremiah 2:26–28 (ESV) 26 “As a thief is shamed when caught, so the house of Israel shall be shamed: they, their kings, their officials, their priests, and their prophets, 27 who say to a tree, ‘You are my father,’ and to a stone, ‘You gave me birth.’ For they have turned their back to me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, ‘Arise and save us!’ 28 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.

Jeremiah 2:29–31 (ESV) 29 “Why do you contend with me? You have all transgressed against me, declares the Lord. 30 In vain have I struck your children; they took no correction; your own sword devoured your prophets like a ravaging lion. 31 And you, O generation, behold the word of the Lord. Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of thick darkness? Why then do my people say, ‘We are free, we will come no more to you’?

Jeremiah 2:32–34 (ESV) 32 Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number. 33 “How well you direct your course to seek love! So that even to wicked women you have taught your ways. 34 Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor; you did not find them breaking in. Yet in spite of all these things

Jeremiah 2:34–37 (ESV) 34 Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor; you did not find them breaking in. Yet in spite of all these things 35 you say, ‘I am innocent; surely his anger has turned from me.’ Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying, ‘I have not sinned.’ 36 How much you go about, changing your way! You shall be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria. 37 From it too you will come away with your hands on your head, for the Lord has rejected those in whom you trust, and you will not prosper by them.

Jeremiah 3:1 (ESV) 1 “If a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man’s wife, will he return to her? Would not that land be greatly polluted? You have played the whore with many lovers; and would you return to me? declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 3:2–3 (ESV) 2 Lift up your eyes to the bare heights, and see! Where have you not been ravished? By the waysides you have sat awaiting lovers like an Arab in the wilderness. You have polluted the land with your vile whoredom. 3 Therefore the showers have been withheld, and the spring rain has not come; yet you have the forehead of a whore; you refuse to be ashamed.

Jeremiah 3:4–5 (ESV) 4 Have you not just now called to me, 'My father, you are the friend of my youth— 5 will he be angry forever, will he be indignant to the end?' Behold, you have spoken, but you have done all the evil that you could."

It sounds horrible right? God is going to pour out His wrath. He has to. They have given Him no other option. In this heavenly courtroom, God is the judge, defense attorney and prosecuting attorney. He has to do what is just. He has just explained to them why He is taking the actions that they are going to experience.

Continuing the image of a Marriage Covenant with an unfaithful spouse, God reminds them of what happened to their Northern Sister Israel when she broke the covenant with Him 100 years prior.

Jeremiah 3:6–8 (ESV) 6 The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah: "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? 7 And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to me,' but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.

God is talking about Spiritual whoredom but also reminding them that Baal worship was sexual adultery as well. He talks about His patience...but she never returned. Judah watched. Watched God judge Israel with divorce and then destroy them. (the punishment for adultery was death)

God asks them...Have you seen what they did on every high place under the trees at Baal's altars. How they prostituted themselves physically and more importantly Spiritually. How they completely rejected Me? Built their own altars, replaced Jerusalem with Samaria, worshiped 2 golden calves, rejected my Holy Days, replaced my Holy Temple with their own? Have you seen what they did? Didn't you learn anything?

But instead of learning....Judah did the same thing.

Jeremiah 3:9–10 (ESV) 9 Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. 10 Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the Lord."

She took her whoredom lightly....she downplayed her sin...She decided that what I call a sin was not a sin. She worshiped every stone and tree...She wanted to have nothing to do with Me. I sent the Assyrians to bring my judgment and completely destroy the ten Northern tribes. You can't find them anymore. Did you not learn anything?

Here is a critical issue. God says that Israel took her sins lightly and completely rejected Him....but Judah played God as stupid. They kept coming to God as if they were not doing anything wrong. They believed they were God's people so they kept up the pretense, celebrated the feasts, celebrated the Sabbath, and came to God as if He did not know or notice what they were doing.

The Northern Israel flat out rejected Him. They committed Spiritual Adultery and stayed with their lover. They created a new religion. New temples. New Rules and refused to celebrate the feasts. They completely rejected God and all that He commanded them.

Judah on the other hand tried to blend God with Baal. They wanted to take the blessings God promised to them and half-heartedly obey Him while chasing their lusts and pursuits for Baal. They pretended to still be married to God...but were courting many other lovers.

Jeremiah 3:11–14 (ESV) 11 And the Lord said to me, "Faithless Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.

Think about how these words were received by Judah. Faithless Israel is Samaria. They hated the Samaritans. Those half breeds who worshiped Baal. And they hated them in God's name. Judah was the chosen one Judah would bring forth the Messiah. Judah was protected by God. The Assyrians couldn't touch Judah. And then God tells them...Faithless Israel...the ten tribes who don't even believe in me anymore...are more righteous than you are. Israel in the North is faithless but at least they are honest about it. Judah is treacherous.

Treacherous...comes from the same word as traitorous. It means one who is always ready to betray your trust....faithless...unreliable....deceptive.

No wonder they hated Jeremiah. God is telling them that all of their sacrifices, all of their celebrations of the Holy Days, all of their rituals, all of their pretend prayers, all of their casual perusal of the Law...it all means nothing to God.

It would be better for you to completely reject me than it is to play Me as a fool and pretend to worship Me.

You feel it too don't you? These words from God through Jeremiah penetrate our hearts today. God is telling them that there is no middle ground. It is more righteous...more honest...more aligned with the character of God to completely reject Him than to pretend to follow Him.

In a weird way, God is telling them to not play Him as stupid. Either reject Him or follow Him. But there is no room for those who want to do both.

Then he tells Jeremiah to go to the few who remain in Samaria...in Northern Israel....that they can still return to Him.

12 Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, "Return, faithless Israel, declares the Lord. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the Lord; I will not be angry forever.

13 Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the Lord your God and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed my voice, declares the Lord. 14 Return, O faithless children, declares the Lord; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Jeremiah 3:16–17 (ESV) 16 And when you have multiplied and been fruitful in the land, in those days, declares the Lord, they shall no more say, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord." It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again. 17 At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.

Wow...God remains committed to the Covenant regardless of the Sins committed against Him. He tells Israel...they can come back to Zion...To Jerusalem if they repent. They thought the sins they had committed had separated them from God forever...but they did not realize that His love and His covenant with them is non-conditional.

And then God gives them an image of what is to come. A day in the future, a future we know as the Millennial Kingdom...when everyone who repents returns to God. All the remnants from all over the world come to Jerusalem and make it their home.

Those in Judea had to wonder...If Israel in the North was more righteous than us...then maybe they will get a second chance to repent and we will not....In other words, are we doomed forever? Is that promised future available to us if we repent? Truly repent.

Jeremiah 3:18–20 (ESV) 18 In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage.

Jeremiah 3:20–22 (ESV) 20 Surely, as a treacherous wife leaves her husband, so have you been treacherous to me, O house of Israel, declares the Lord.' "...22 "Return, O faithless sons; I will heal your faithlessness."

What heart must they have in order to return to the Lord and enjoy the promised covenant? Next verse.

Jeremiah 3:25 (ESV) 25 Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us. For we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God."

The lesson for us? It is more righteous to turn away from God completely than to pretend to follow Him and knowingly reject Him and His commandments. He is telling them that the end punishment is the same. Both Israel and Judah are going to come under the wrath of God's judgement. Pretending to follow God is worse than completely rejecting Him. He is saying, I would rather that you be honest and just reject me than to play me as a fool with false worship and pretense.

We too today fake the Holy Days. Many attend church at Easter and Christmas...we pretend to worship a God that we have rejected for the other 363 days each year.....Many fire up pretend prayers before important meals or recite rote prayers that no longer mean anything to them...Many come to church....serve in the church...look like the church...and are playing God as fool.

God is not calling out those who are in churches trying to find Him...trying to understand Him...He is calling out everyone who has come up out of the water and professed to be a follower of Jesus. You have to be all in...or not in at all. And if you have truly received Jesus you are by definition already all in and God will lead you to live like it.

One inference here is that it would be more righteous to be one of the people who spat on and mocked Jesus....than to be Judas. The guards were honest..they hated Jesus and wanted Him dead....Judas pretended...He too hated Jesus...He just kept it secret...He went through the motions...looking just like all the other disciples...He was good at it too. No one had any idea it was him. Both the guard and Judas received the same judgement and punishment.

Wait a minute....Judas hated Jesus? Hated Him? All three years? Ah there we go again....thinking there is a middle ground. There are two kinds of humans in the world today. Those who love Jesus with all of their heart and those who hate Him and follow Satan. You and I are one or the other....we don't flip back and forth...We have either surrendered to Jesus and become new creations in the Spirit or we remain in our sinful flesh as enemies of God.

We can love Jesus and still sin...but we cannot love Jesus and pretend that He doesn't see our sin. If we love Him...we can't play Him as a fool. Why? Because the Holy Spirit that now is in us and works through us will not allow us to mock Jesus. The Holy Spirit will CONVICT us of our sins. If we are not convicted at all...if we feel no guilt, shame or disappointment regarding our sins...we must ask if we have the Spirit in us. If we have all of those feelings about our sins.,and refuse to repent...to agree with God and confess... we must ask we are truly surrendered to the God that is in us.

Let me be very clear here...so you don't leave with the wrong impression. All of us as believers sin. All of us as believers still living in fallen flesh, downplay our sin. But the Holy Spirit convicts us...makes us aware of things we have done. We can reject that conviction, we can ignore it, we can explain it away, we can try to rewrite the Bible, we can tell God what He really meant..... We are still saved but God is not a fool and God sees the truth that is in our hearts.

Unrepentant and unconfessed sin will bring judgmental consequences to all believers. It will not impact our salvation but it will surely impact our experiences on earth.

IMAGE 1 Imagine standing by a south window on a cold winter day. The air is frigid, but the sun is shining through the window. It begins to warm you, and you bask in its glow. Then you pull the drape closed. Instantly, the warmth stops. Is it because the sun has stopped shining? No, it is because something has come between you and the sun. The moment you open the drape, the sun can warm you again. But it is up to you. The barrier is inside the house, not outside.

He wants us to bask in the warmth of His smile. But when we choose sin, we build a barrier between ourselves and our holy Father. We pull the drape on fellowship with Him and begin to feel the chill of spiritual loneliness. Many times, we angrily accuse God of leaving us when, in truth, we have left Him. When we stubbornly refuse to repent, we will be disciplined by our loving Father

Hebrews 12:7–13 (ESV) 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

The Lord's discipline can be severe, even leading to death when a heart has hardened to the point of no return

Note what Paul says to believers who pretended to go through the Lord's Supper.....

1 Corinthians 11:30–32 (ESV) 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

To those seeking Elder prayer...

James 5:14–16 (ESV) 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

He leaves our free will intact. We must pull back the drape by confessing and repenting. If, as children of God, we choose to remain in our sin, then we choose the consequences that go with that choice. Broken fellowship and lack of growth result.

However, those who persist in sin need to reexamine their true relationship with God

2 Corinthians 13:5–7 (ESV) 5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

Scripture is clear that those who know God do not continue a lifestyle of unrepentant sin. A desire for holiness is a hallmark of those who know God.

1 John 2:3–6 (ESV) 3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

1 John 3:7–10 (ESV) 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

To know God is to love Him . To love Him is to desire to please Him.

Matthew 22:37–38 (ESV) 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment.

John 14:15–17 (ESV) 15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

I often wonder...how many illnesses...how many unexpected financial burdens...how many sleepless nights...how many hours of worry and anxiety...how many of the challenges we face every day as believers...are actually the loving correction of God trying to draw us back to Him and confess unrepentant sin.

God's way...in love...of telling His children...don't play Me for a fool. When things get bad enough you will come back to me.

Don't skip the cleansing at the laver and try to pretend I don't see it in the Holy Place. Unconfessed sin gets in the way of pleasing Him, so a true child of God wants to confess it, change it, and restore fellowship with God.

At Remnant we will not....we cannot....make you feel ok about your sin....We don't pretend here....because God does not give us that option....All of us continue to sin every day...God can accept that...we just need to confess it and repent.

Are you trying to hide from God behind the curtain that is your sin?

My daughter used to hide behind our curtains when we played hide and go seek...she thought she was hiding...but it was obvious where she was....I wasn't a fool.

God is waiting to forgive your sin...just please don't play Him for a fool. Everybody plays the fool..there is no exception to the rule. Come to the Altar and tell Him what He already knows. All of us have sins to confess. If you don't believe me ask God to examine your heart right now.

Let me finish with Jeremiah's next verse to us as a call to the Altar.

Jeremiah 3:25 (ESV) 25 Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us. For we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God."

Jeremiah 4:1–2 (ESV) 1 "If you return, O Israel....(Oh Remnant)...., declares the Lord, to me you should return. If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver, 2 and if you swear, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."

Let's pray and then fill this altar.