

Jeremiah 50: 1-5; “A Perpetual Covenant”, Sermon #57 in the series – “Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 7th, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.

This morning I want you to see that there is real hope and salvation for those who have been taken captive by their own sins and oppressed by the Devil, through false religion. Just as the children of Israel in that past day, came to understand what it meant to be brought back from their captivity, and to make a covenant with God, so you also can be brought back from the captivity of sin into God’s favor and His blessing upon your life. This applies both to those who want to be saved, and to those Christians who want to leave off their backsliding and follow the Lord fully. You can do so, you can find salvation and restoration by making a perpetual covenant with the Lord. This will involve taking 3 deliberate steps to find salvation, with the full realization that grace must be at work in your heart. What will it mean for the Jews? And what will it mean for me? These are the things that I want to explore with you.

1st of all – It will involve your coming to God Himself with a broken heart.

If you read through these last chapters of Jeremiah you will find a progression in the Lord’s judgments. The Lord first dealt with His own people for their departing from Him. He then dealt with the nations around Judah and Jerusalem. That is the order of these chapters. He first had Israel taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar, to Babylon, and their temple was destroyed. Then He judged the nations around Israel based on their treatment of them. The Lord always begins with His own people in judgment. His honor is at stake. He will discipline those who truly know Him, and those who are hypocrites and pretenders will be revealed for what they are. And punishments are sent accordingly to His people. It says in 1st Peter 4: 17 – “It is time for judgment to begin at the house of God, and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

Well after judging His own people we find that God’s judgment is then prophesied to come upon all the nations surrounding them. And then it finally comes to Babylon also. The City state of Chaldea, the City which was the instrument of judgment to Israel and Judah, and all the surrounding nations, she would receive the cup of judgment herself, from the hand of the Lord. In my next few sermons from Jeremiah, I want to attempt to show you that understanding what Babylon was, both actually and typically, is one of the major keys to understanding prophecy in both the Old and New Testaments. In that Old Testament time, a literal Babylon conquered, and took captive, and oppressed the people of God. In these New Testament times a spiritual Babylon has taken captive and oppressed the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The repentance of these Jews is described for us here as a “going and weeping” in the King James. Verse 4 – “In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall and seek the Lord their God.” This is what Israel shall do someday. If you look at this passage in its context, it is a description of the future conversion of the Jews, which is to take place at the time of the destruction of Spiritual Babylon, sometime in the future. It will be a tremendous event in human history, and in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ. So too, this passage describes how any sinner seeking salvation may come to Christ.

Let’s think of how it was for them at the time when Jeremiah wrote this. Israel was going into captivity for their worship of false gods and their departing from their God, the only true and living God. Being in captivity to sin, first of all, they eventually were led into a state of captivity in a foreign land, geographically and physically. But promises were given, that to those who trusted in God and repented of their sins, they personally would be forgiven. And there

would be a faithful remnant brought back after 70 years in this captivity in Babylon. We can apply it in this way. When grace is at work in your heart, you will want to return to God. You want to come out of your captivity to sin. If you are already a true Christian, you will want your backsliding to come to an end. You want to return to a sincere, loving, and faithful obedience to God and to His word. It takes deliberate action on your part. You must make definite plans to leave the place of captivity and to return. So you go to God by faith, and in repentance and in humble prayer before Him, you tell Him that you will believe in His promises, and that you will repent of all of your sins; the sins which have led you into this captivity.

But, you know, some people say that they want to know God and yet they hesitate to leave the false church that they grew up in, or the false religion that they have gotten into. You cannot really know God, follow Christ, or learn what His will is, without a real and through on-going study of the Bible, and an application to your own heart and actions. If you want to know God, you cannot go to a church which is telling you that you are going to be saved by a sacramental salvation, or by believing in a gospel of works, or a gospel of positive thinking. It simply will not do. Finding God and obtaining salvation comes by your taking deliberate action to believe and to act upon the truth. When you realize that it is your sin which has brought you into this spiritual captivity that you feel, you must not wait, you must go to God. You must not sit still. You must not think to be indifferent about the matter.

Charles Spurgeon says – “Oh sirs, believe me that being saved is not child’s play; it is not a matter to be dreamed over.” “No man ever hit this mark by accident.” “No man’s soul was ever saved by mere chance.” “Many a soul has gone to hell through neglect, but never has even one soul gone to heaven in that way.” (end of quote) And so, you see, that whenever anyone has a real need, they do something about it. A person’s greatest need is to know God Himself. And so you must come to the place where you ask yourself – Why is it that I do not really know God or have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? The Bible says that it is because of your sin. It is not as though His arm is so short that He cannot save, or that His ear is so deaf that He cannot hear you. But it is because your sins have made a separation between you and your God. (Isaiah 59: 2) Your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear.

But the people of our text were the professed people of God, who were taken into captivity in Babylon, because of their sinful neglect of not heeding God’s word. Sometimes even true Christians have a sad, discouraged, defeated spirit and attitude because they will not come to God, return to Him, to have the deepest needs of their soul met. They do not understand that Christ watches them and observes them in all the situations of their life. Song of Solomon 2: 9 – “My Beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.” “Behold, he stands behind our wall; He is looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice.” Sometimes we do not understand that our Lord is seeking fellowship and communion with us, but we are too tired, and we do not understand that He can come to refresh us.

Song of Solomon 5: 2 – “I sleep, but heart is awake; it is the voice of my beloved!” “He knocks, saying, ‘Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.’” The Shulamite says – “I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again?” “I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?” “My beloved put his hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for him.” “I arose to open for my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock.” “I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and was gone.” “My heart leaped up when he spoke.” “I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.” “The watchmen who went about the city found me.” “They struck me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took my veil away from me.” “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am lovesick!”

This is the picture of a true Christian; the one who did not realize that their Lord comes to them at very specific times; times when they are dead tired. They have gone through all of the motions for getting ready for bed, and getting a good sleep, and then they realize that Christ is at the door of their heart. He has much to give to their spirit to encourage them, and to refresh them spiritually, but they are more concerned about their own tiredness than they are knowing His helpful and loving fellowship with them. They know that they should desire fellowship with Him enough to get up and answer the door, but they fail to do it in a timely fashion, and so He leaves. The sense of His presence is not there with them. They get up later, because they know that they should want this fellowship with Him, but by that time, He will not meet with them. They frantically go and look for Him.

They go to church and the watchmen, the minister and others, “find” them with their exhortations, their counsels, and their rebukes of how the Lord cannot be treated in the way that they have done. The words of the righteous smite them and they wound them, but nothing can be done without coming and weeping over the lack of faith and interest being shown by ourselves. How essential it is to come back to Christ and to come back with weeping if need be. How essential is godly sorrow to repentance. In Matthew 5: 4, Jesus says – “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

This mourning is not a onetime acknowledging of your sins. It is not a general acknowledging of your sins. It is a turning from your sin with sorrow and loathing. It is a continual weeping in the soul that you have not been living to God’s glory. It is a declaring to God that your joy has been more in earthly things, not in spiritual things. The Christian’s mourning is not altogether joyless, however. There is an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. Listen to Spurgeon once again: “There is such a thing as a bitter sweet – the worldling has that; but there is also such a thing as a sweet bitter, and the Christian often hath that; so that, while he is weeping he can also be singing; while his soul is cast down within him, yet doth he lift up his horn on high, and rejoice in the God of his salvation. (Vol. 53, P. 349)

So, you see, the true Christian will always be mourning over his own sins and the sins of others, but he will always be rejoicing in what Jesus has done for him, in dying for his sins and in giving Himself for him. Tears of sorrow often give way to tears of joy when the greatness of Christ’s sufferings and death are meditated upon, as having been experienced by Him, for our being brought back. Let us also remember that tears are not always the sign of grace at work. It may only be the indication of great sorrow due to self-pity, and the frustration of things not going the way that you want them to. Our tears of repentance flow when we consider our sinfulness in the light of how we have dishonored God, and how we have misspent all that He has given us.

Sometimes a person will cry for themselves, and not so much for what God’s expectation was for them. But nevertheless, there is great value in coming to God and weeping before Him. The Scriptures are very expressive at this point. Psalm 62: 8 – “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is refuge for us.” And Psalm 116, verses 5-7 – “Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.” “The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and he saved me.” “Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” “For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling, and I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”

2nd – Making a Perpetual Covenant will involve your asking and seeking the way to Zion. (verses 4b and 5)

“With continual weeping they will come, and seek the Lord their God.” “They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it, saying, ‘Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten.’ If you are intending to go to heaven, it is good to ask directions. If you would be saved from your sins and worship with His blood-bought

children, you would do well to inquire – Which is the way to Zion?” For Zion is the place where God manifests Himself. To inquire the way to Zion is when you ask how you might find God, how you may be reconciled to Him, how you might be pardoned by Him, and then you look for a good church to put down roots in. In Old Testament times, when Solomon was king, Zion was the only place where the offering of sacrifices was permitted to be offered. It was the only place where God had specifically said that the sacrifice of bulls and goats, or rams and lambs, was to take place. To come to Mt. Zion today is to come to the place where Jesus Christ is preached, where His one and only acceptable sacrifice is set forth, where among His people the sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered, and where peace is found between God and man, through faith in the Christ of the gospel.

Zion is the City of God, the City of the great King, and the heavenly Jerusalem. It includes all who believe in Jesus Christ, whether they are on earth, or whether they are in heaven. It is composed of the Church Militant here on earth, and the Church Triumphant, who are in heaven. It is Christ’s Church in New Testament days. It is His spiritual kingdom which is not of this world, but very real in the hearts of God’s people and in their fellowship which they have with one another. To enter this Zion, and to become one of its citizens, you must ask the way. The person who asks – What must I do to be saved, will find their way to the Zion, because they will be directed there by people who love her walls. “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain.” “Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” “God is in her palaces He is known as her refuge.”

The perpetual covenant that you enter into when you believe in Jesus Christ, is to receive Him and the great salvation that He will bring to you. You are justified by faith. You are adopted into the spiritual family of God. But this means that you will also seek to join with a church of His people. Psalm 48: 8 says – As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, the city of our God: God will establish it forever.” “Selah”. “We have thought on your lovingkindness, in the midst of Your temple.” “According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness.” “Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of Your judgments.” If you have thought on the lovingkindness of the Lord, you will show your thankfulness by being the midst of the assembly of His people.

So, the temple in New Testament times is the spiritual Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to 2nd Corinthians 6: 14-18. “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” “For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?” “And what communion has light with darkness?” “And what accord has Christ with Belial?” “Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?” “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” “For you are the temple of the living God.” “As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them.’ “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” “Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord.” “Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

So this is the covenant language, the language of the Perpetual Covenant that is spoken about in our text. A covenant is an oath-bound sworn promise; first of all made by God Himself, as it is found in the gospel; that the person who will repent of their sins and will take Christ as their Savior and Lord, that person shall be saved. All that is required of you is that you repent and believe in Christ. Repentance, although it is a work, it is first of all a grace that is granted to you through Christ in the New Covenant. That grace is then exercised by you in turning away from idols and turning to God as I have already spoken about. But it is also agreeing and purposing to walk in the path of righteousness and to become a part of a local church, becoming a member of the local “temple of the living God”.

Hebrews 12: 22 – “But you have come to Mt. Zion and the city of the living God.” And verse 24 – “To Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of the sprinkling that speaks better than the blood of Abel. So, the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is a temple, but the temple is people, not brick and mortar. It is a group of people who has agreed together to be righteous, to walk in the light and not the darkness, to follow Christ and not Belial (the Devil), to walk in faith and love, to put away all idols; to bear witness to the truth which has been given to us, together. We come out and separate ourselves from walking with worldly and ungodly people, and we covenant together in the sight of God not to touch what is unclean, morally and spiritually.

If we enter into this Perpetual covenant, and if we abide by the conditions of it, as a believer in Christ, then God promises that He will dwell in us. He will walk among us to establish us in righteousness, not only individually, but corporately as a church. God will be seen as our Father, Christ as our brother, the Holy Spirit as our Helper, and we will be seen by Him as His sons and daughters; those whom He will lead and guide and bring to holiness, true happiness, and heaven. Have you sought the way to Zion? Have you found it?

3rd – Making a Perpetual Covenant will mean joining yourself to the Lord in a way which will not be forgotten.

Verse 5 says – “Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten.” To be joined to the Lord means that you must be joined spiritually to the Lord Jesus Christ. In marriage there is a formal ceremony whereby you promise to give yourself to the one whom you love for as long as you live. In coming to Christ it is very similar. By faith you give yourself to the Lord. In 2nd Corinthians 8: 5, the apostle Paul says – “They first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” If a person does not know the Lord, they are still joined to their sins. In Hosea 4: 17 it says – “Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.” But in 1st Corinthians 6: 17, it says – “The one who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

When you give yourself to the Lord by faith, you are entering into a perpetual covenant, and it will not be forgotten; either by the Lord, or by you. The Lord is always faithful to His covenant. He will always be mindful of you, the one who has savingly trusted in Christ. He has sealed you with His Holy Spirit. He will teach you and guide you into all the truth. He will forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. He will teach you and lead you on the path of righteousness for His own name’s sake. Psalm 25: 8-10 – “Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He teaches sinners in the way.” “The meek He will guide in justice, the meek will He teach His way.” “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep His covenant and testimonies.”

Now, you can see that the Lord will always be your faithful Lord, when You take Him to be your God through faith in Jesus Christ. He will teach you, the sinner, in His way; the way of doing what is right. He will be faithful to give to you, the one who has entered into covenant with Him, grace in relation to keeping the truth of His word and His commandments. His paths are all mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. What will it mean for you to keep His covenant? Well, that is found in verses 11-22.

“For Your name’s sake, O LORD, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” “Who is the man that fears the LORD?” “Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.” “He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth.” “The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.” “My eyes are ever toward the LORD, For He shall pluck my feet out of the net.” “Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, For I am desolate and afflicted.” “The troubles of my heart have enlarged; bring me out of my distresses!” “Look on my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins.” “Consider my enemies, for they are many; And they hate me with cruel hatred.” “Keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be

ashamed, for I put my trust in You.” “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for You. Redeem Israel, O God, Out of all their troubles!”

You can see that your part in keeping this Perpetual Covenant is first of all – to confess your sins. Pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Then it is to fear the Lord; that is, to have regard for Him, for His word, His commandments, to reverence His person, and to believe that God shall teach you in the way that you should choose; that is His holy way. The Lord will bless the man who fears Him. (vs. 12) He will find that many blessings are laid up for him daily. The secret of the Lord, how to keep covenant with God, is with those who fear Him. He will show them His covenant faithfulness, His care over every aspect of your life, in regard to sin and righteousness and your spiritual prosperity and well-being.

He will show you how to be faithful. So your eyes will ever be looking toward Him. (Psalm 25, vs. 15) And in the times of difficulty with people, as you look to Him for help and obey His word, He will pluck your feet out of the net that they have laid for you. People may hate you with a cruel hatred. But you will be praying that the Lord will keep your soul and deliver you; that He will not let you would not be ashamed, because you will be trusting in Him. And your part in this perpetual covenant will be established by your praying this prayer in Psalm 25, verse 21 – “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for You, O Lord.” “Redeem me out of all my troubles!”

That is what it means to join yourself to God in a Perpetual Covenant which will not be forgotten. God will not forget to save you and give you help. He will not remember your sins, but He will remember to watch over you and keep your soul; to teach you His holy way, to lead you to become the holy man or woman of God that you want to be. He will watch over you in all your ways, whether you are going out or coming in, from this time forth and forevermore. But you remember pledge yourself to remember Him as well.

Let me read to you Isaiah 45: 22 in closing. Making a Perpetual Covenant that will not be forgotten is a form of holy swearing, on the part of God and on the part of the believer. “Look unto Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!” “For I am God there is no other.” “I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.” “He shall say, ‘Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength.’” “To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him.” “In the Lord all the descendants of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory.”