

Introduction

The OT prophet Hosea had an unfaithful wife. Yet, Hosea, by God's direction, continued to be faithful to her, forgive her, and restore her into their marriage. Many of you probably know of similar marriages. You have seen husbands or wives be continually unfaithful while the other spouse continues to love them and forgive them. We often wonder how someone could continue to be unfaithful when their spouse responds so patiently.

Main Idea

How does God's character shape our relationship with Him?

[Jeremiah 2](#) describes the unfaithfulness of Judah. This chapter highlights that devotion to the Lord is **relational**; therefore, sin is also relational. God's character is the basis of that relationship. In summary, [Jeremiah 2](#) explains that **We should be faithful to the Lord because He is faithful to us.**

A Holy People

God's people have a covenant relationship with Him. Verses 1-3 look back in Judah's history to a time when the nation had been faithful in that covenant relationship. [Jeremiah 2:1-3](#) "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.""

The rest of this chapters highlights Judah's fall. These opening verses paint a picture of Judah's past faithfulness. Like a bride, Judah loved the Lord, was devoted to Him, and followed Him. Israel was holy to the Lord; that is, they were devoted only to Him.

Even by our God-given conscience, we understand this is how relationships should be. Husbands and wives should love one another and be devoted to a monogamous relationship.

The same is true in relation to the Lord. Faith in the Lord is not religious activity or a doctrinal confession. Faith in the Lord is relational. In Jesus, we have an eternal covenant relationship with the Lord.

Unbelievers: If you have never heard or responded to the gospel, Scripture does not expect a ritualistic response to God's promise of salvation through Jesus. Genuine faith requires belief in Jesus, but also love for Him and devotion to Him.

God's people have a covenant relationship with Him.

Remember Redemption

The Lord redeems His people into that relationship. That is, He saves us from sin and eternal death through Jesus's atoning death. Unfortunately, Judah had forgotten God's redemption. [Jeremiah 2:4-8](#) "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?' 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."

Notice that verses 6 and 8 rebuke the nation and the priests because they failed to ask, "Where is the Lord?" They had been slaves in Egypt in a previous generations, but the Lord redeemed them, faithfully led them through the wilderness, and gave them the land of the Canaanites.

They **knew** of the Lord's redemption, but they did not **reflect on** the Lord's redemption. The nation turned to idolatry, devoting themselves to the gods of nearby nations. No one in the nation asked, "where is the Lord?"

How quickly God's people can forget His redemption and faithfulness. I was eternally enslaved to sin, resulting in eternal death. But God saved me and set me free. Jesus lived a sinless life in my place, died in my place, and atoned for my sin by His death.

The Lord redeems His people into a relationship.

Dead gods

The Lord alone gives life because He is the living God. Judah had abandoned the Lord for false gods. Even pagan nations were more faithful than Judah. [Jeremiah 2:9-11](#) "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."

There was great irony in Judah following the gods of their neighbors. Even their neighbors would not forsake their gods for other gods. Yet Judah had exchanged the glory of the true, living God for gods that are not gods ([Rom 1:23](#); [1 Cor 8:4-6](#)).

The great irony of forsaking the Lord is that Judah exchanged a relationship with the only living God to follow gods that could not give them life. [Jeremiah 2:12-19](#) “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. 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? 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.”

Judah had committed two sins in one act. First, they had forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water. The NT builds on this metaphor of living water. Jesus told a Samaritan woman that He was the source of living water; that is eternal life ([John 4:13-14](#); cf. [John 7:37-39](#)). Only Jesus can make you eternally alive. Judah had forsaken the source of living water.

Second, they had devoted themselves to things that could not give life. Verse 13 says they made cisterns, but not cisterns that could hold water. Verse 18 says they sought living water by turning to the gods of Egypt, the nation to whom they had been enslaved, and the gods of the Assyrians, the nation who had destroyed the northern nation of Israel. They were enslaving themselves to other gods - gods that could not give them life.

To whom are the Lord's people devoted? I am certain we would say that we are devoted to the Lord; however, our lives often reveal a different devotion. We devote ourselves to our possessions, our careers, our hobbies. We devote ourselves to laying up treasures on earth, forgetting that all of those things will pass away ([Matt 6:19-21](#)). We exchange the Lord who gives us life for created things that are dead.

The Lord alone gives life because He is the living God.

Adultery

Sin is adultery because redemption is relational. Judah's sin was not transactional; it was relational. They forsook a **relationship** with the Lord. [Jeremiah 2:20-25](#) “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 [prostitute]. 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. 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.’”

These verses clarify the severity of devotion to created things. Judah’s idolatry was relational. They had traded a relationship with the Lord for a relationship with idols. They had traded a love for the Lord for a love for idols. Like a promiscuous woman, Judah pursued every god she could find, although she was in a covenant relationship with the Lord.

We often wrongly think of sin as being unfaithful to a command. For example, if we lie, we treat the lie as breaking a command. In reality, sin breaks fellowship with God, not just a command ([1 John 1:5-6](#)).

Redemption is relational; therefore, sin is adultery.

No salvation

Ultimately, all people will answer for their relationship with the Lord.

Only the Lord can save because He created all things. Judah, however, ascribed creation to the gods whom they made. Unfortunately, our idols cannot save. [Jeremiah 2:26–28](#) “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.”

Notice to what Judah had devoted themselves. They turned to things of wood and stone; that is, they were devoted to created things, material things. They credited these gods with creating them. In reality, they made the gods. Now, they were facing pressure from the Babylonians. How could the gods whom they made save them?

The Lord created all all things; therefore, all things belong to Him. [1 Corinthians 8:6](#) “... there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” We belong to the Lord who created us.

Created things cannot save you. Your career may give you temporary security, but it cannot eternally save you. Wealth may give you temporary security, but it cannot eternally save you. Salvation is from the Lord ([Jon 2:9](#)). Jesus died to atone for the sins of those who have faith in Him and to save us from our sins.

Only the Lord can save because He created all things.

Judgment against sin

God judges all sin because God is just. However, Judah counted on God's love that he would overlook their sin, ignoring His justice. [Jeremiah 2:29-34](#) “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 ravening 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’? 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 ...”

Judah was unrepentant. The Lord had not abandoned them, yet they forgot Him. He had corrected them, yet they refused to return to Him. They had killed the prophets of God and preyed on the innocent and weak. God had been patient so that they would have ample opportunity to repent, yet they remained unfaithful.

[Jeremiah 2:34-37](#) “... 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.”

Judah **expected** God to overlook their sin. Yet, he promised them judgment. They wanted to unite with Egypt and Assyria, idolatrous nations. Therefore, they would share in the Lord's judgment against those nations.

God is just; He will not overlook sin ([Exod 34:7](#); [Nah 1:3](#)). Scripture warns us to not mistake God's patience for Him turning a blind eye to sin ([Rom 2:4](#); [2 Pet 3:9](#)). **The Lord judges all sin because He is just.**

Conclusion

Summary

How does God's character shape our relationship with Him?

Salvation is not a ritual or a doctrinal confession. Salvation is reconciliation with the Lord. Although we were dead in our sins, the Lord made us alive through Jesus's atoning death. Those who have faith in Jesus are reconciled into a covenant relationship with the Lord.

Just as salvation is relational; sin is also relational. We do not merely sin against a list of commands. We sin against the Lord who loves us and gave Himself for us. Only the Lord will judge all people and only the Lord can save.

Response

One thing this passage teaches us is to remember the Lord. Remember that He created us. Remember that He redeems us from sin through Jesus. Remember that He gives us eternal life. Remember that He reconciles us into a relationship with Him. Remember who the Lord is and what He has done. **Daily, we should reflect on the Lord.**

A second thing this passage teaches us is that those who know the Lord should be devoted to a relationship with Him. Do not give your heart to your career. Do not give your heart to money or possessions. Do not give your heart to things that will die with you. Devote yourself to the Lord; devote yourself to eternal things in Christ. **We should be faithful the Lord who is faithful to us.**