

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

EXPOSITORY SERMON

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PKBedwell@hotmail.com

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Bedwellglobalministries.com

WHAT ABOUT LOVE.....?"

Scripture Reading – Jeremiah 2:1-13.

Introduction

The prophecy of Jeremiah belongs to a period of chaos in the checkered History of God's covenant people. Jerusalem the southern kingdom of Judah was caught up in a power squeeze between the three great powers of the world of that day. As Egypt, Assyrian and Babylon struggled for dominance with one another, the strangle hold grew tighter around Judah's neck. For years the nation had rejected the worship of Jehovah and turned to the worship of pagan idols. They made alliances with Egypt against the Babylonians. God, however had expressly forbidden His people to make alliances with pagan nations. Injustice, corruption and idolatry had invaded the land. It was in this setting that we discover the prophet of God – Jeremiah. God had revealed to him that his people were under the cloud of His judgment because of their sin. The

Babylonians were to be the instrument by which God would punish the nation. The prophet Jeremiah was the mouthpiece of God and he faithfully carried out God's mandate for about forty years. He lived through the reign of five kings and NEVER deviated from his message or his mission. He was compelled from within. He was a driven man. Jeremiah reveals the intensity of that inner compulsion for he testified that the "Word of the Lord is in my heart like a fire- a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in, in deed I cannot." (Jeremiah 20:9.) That fire! That passion! compelled this man of God to deliver God's message without fear and without apology. Certainly it was not a pleasant message but Jeremiah moved quickly to pin point the heart of the nation's problem which had to do with **a lost and neglected love for God**. When Jeremiah exposed this problem he put his finger on what is a priority to God. It brings to the surface what is of first importance to God. It highlights what He wants most from us. He wants our love above all else. This is the very main thing of all. Its importance is intensified because we sense that it is a brokenhearted, grief stricken God who speaks through His servant Jeremiah. He feels the pain of a lost love. He feels the wrench of a broken love relationship. And God comes to His people through His servant Jeremiah who sets about dealing with this issue. He does this by revealing the heart of God. He begins by recounting God's, instrument by which God would punish the nation.

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1. REMINISCENCE OF THE LOVE THAT WAS, Jeremiah 2:2-3.

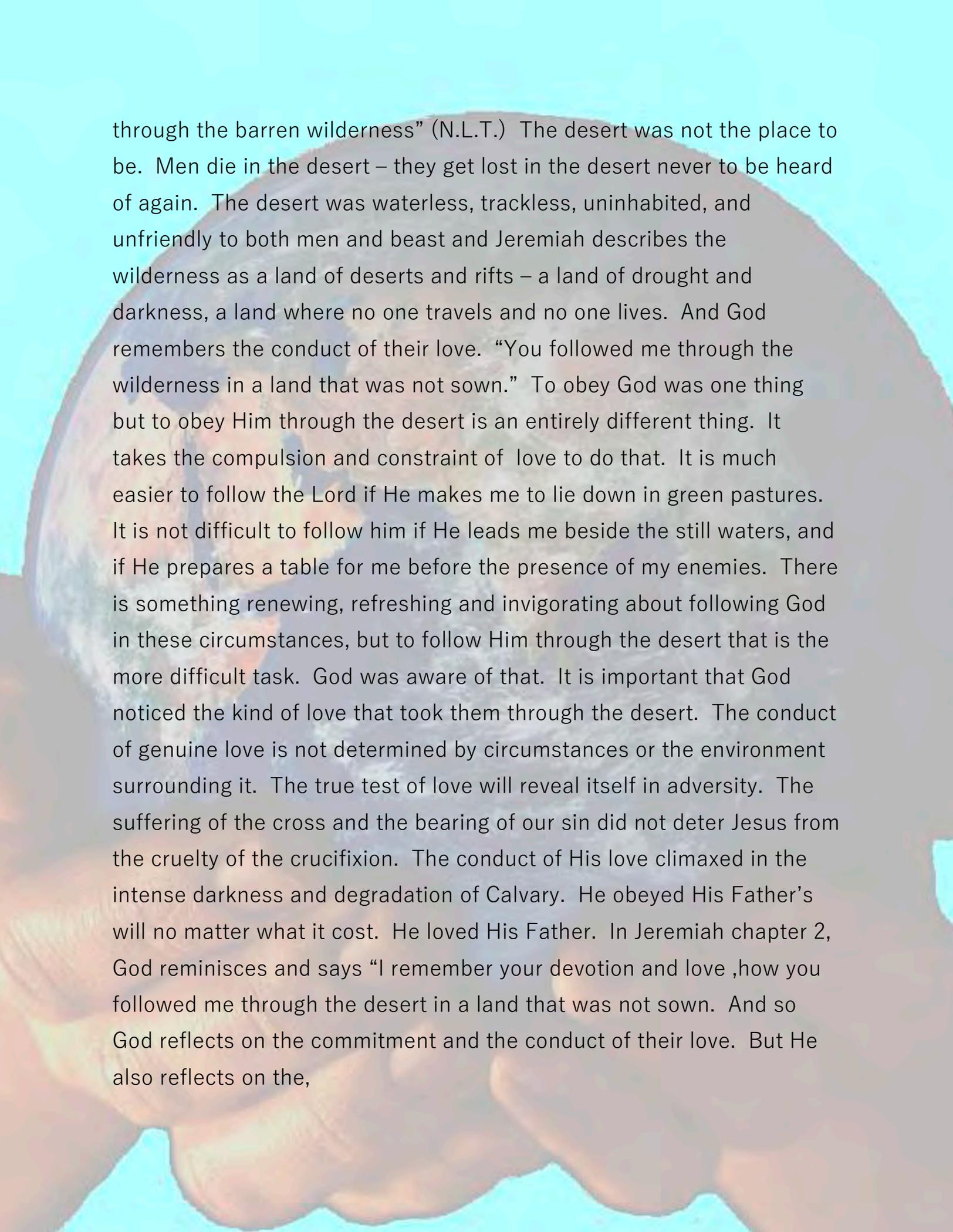
The nation’s love for God was history and He was heartbroken about it. There is an unmistakable wistfulness – a distinct nostalgia in the words of God, which point to this disturbing tragedy in the nation. The Words of God spoken through Jeremiah are spoken in metaphorical language but they graphically describe the pain God feels at the loss of the nation’s love. “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown. **Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of His harvest.**” This is a clear expression of brokenness of God’s heart. It verifies without doubt that God wants love for Him to be of top priority. It is really what matters to him the most. He remembers and reminisces on the love that used be. It was love that kept them obedient as they traveled through the wilderness – through the barren wastes of the wilderness. **The tragedy was that their love for Him was simply a fragrant memory of the past. It was love recorded, not love in reality. It was love as history and not love in the present. It was love written in the memoirs of the Book of God, but not love written in the hearts of his people. But God had not forgotten that love.** The fact that God highlights it, is a clear indication of its importance to Him. For a relationship with Him is not founded on legislation. It is rooted in a love for Him. A relationship with out love has no vitality – no vigor – no health – no dynamic and no life. Now when God reminisces on the love of His people. He is reflecting,

a. The Commitment of their Love. Jeremiah 2:2.

God says to them, “I remember the unfailing devotion of your youth and the love of your bridal days or how as a bride you followed me through the desert.” Note how God ties together obedience to Him and love for Him. “I remember how eager you were to please me as young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness.(N.L.T.). Obedience to the will of God is evidence of a love for God. And the language here is the language of the wedding day and the early days of marriage. It recalls those days of the first flush of committed love. God remembers the time when the nation’s commitment to God was a priority and their devotion to Him was the primary concern of the people. The word bridal indicates the nation’s covenant relationship with God. It recalls that day when the vows were taken and a commitment was made to God. At Mount Sinai, Moses brought the words of the law and the Book of the Covenant and sprinkled the people with the Blood of the Covenant, and the people responded “We will do everything that the Lord has said. We will obey. The nation was about to embark upon its glorious history. Its heart was full of hope and its future full of promise. What a dramatic moment in *its history when they declared with one voice* **“We will do everything the Lord has said we will do.”** This was their commitment of love to God and now they had gone back on their covenant promise, and God longingly and wistfully remembered the hour when Israel became His bride as it were. “I remember you as a bride.” God reflects on the commitment of their love for Him.. He also reflects on the,

b. The Conduct of their Love. Jeremiah 2:2.

“I remember how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land that was not sown. “you followed me even



through the barren wilderness” (N.L.T.) The desert was not the place to be. Men die in the desert – they get lost in the desert never to be heard of again. The desert was waterless, trackless, uninhabited, and unfriendly to both men and beast and Jeremiah describes the wilderness as a land of deserts and rifts – a land of drought and darkness, a land where no one travels and no one lives. And God remembers the conduct of their love. “You followed me through the wilderness in a land that was not sown.” To obey God was one thing but to obey Him through the desert is an entirely different thing. It takes the compulsion and constraint of love to do that. It is much easier to follow the Lord if He makes me to lie down in green pastures. It is not difficult to follow him if He leads me beside the still waters, and if He prepares a table for me before the presence of my enemies. There is something renewing, refreshing and invigorating about following God in these circumstances, but to follow Him through the desert that is the more difficult task. God was aware of that. It is important that God noticed the kind of love that took them through the desert. The conduct of genuine love is not determined by circumstances or the environment surrounding it. The true test of love will reveal itself in adversity. The suffering of the cross and the bearing of our sin did not deter Jesus from the cruelty of the crucifixion. The conduct of His love climaxed in the intense darkness and degradation of Calvary. He obeyed His Father’s will no matter what it cost. He loved His Father. In Jeremiah chapter 2, God reminisces and says “I remember your devotion and love ,how you followed me through the desert in a land that was not sown. And so God reflects on the commitment and the conduct of their love. But He also reflects on the,

c. The Character of their Love. Jeremiah 2:3

Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of His harvest.” Israel was sacred to the Lord – sanctified to the Lord – separated to the Lord and holy to the Lord. This is how God saw His people. This is also what He expected of His people. This describes the character or the nature of their love for Him. Let us never forget that this nation had

accepted the laws of God as their life-style. The words of the law and the Book of the Covenant given to the nation by God gave insight into the Holy Character of God. David Seamands points out “that the ten commandments do not begin with prohibitions. They do not begin with you shall not. The ten commandments begin with the character of God. God tells us who He is before He gives a single rule. “I am the Lord your God who brought you

out of bondage. All of His laws emanate from the character of God. He is a Holy Redeeming, Delivering God. He is the only authentic God. The Ten Commandments tell us who God is. They show us that He in essence is holy, and because He is holy any relationship with Him must of necessity be a holy relationship. God made clear that His people were to be distinctly different from the pagan nations around them. It was that distinctiveness that made them strong and great, and would continue to do so long as they remained holy to the Lord. He would be their defense and protector. Note the words in verse 3. “All who harmed my people were considered guilty, and disaster fell upon them. I, the Lord, have spoken(N.L.T.) But something had happened to God’s people for the Lord said “Israel **was** holy to the Lord, and the fragrance of that memory flooded the mind of God and broke His heart. Not only was there the reminiscence of the nation ‘s love that was, but there was

also,

2. THE REGRESSION OF THE LOVE THAT WAS. Jeremiah 2:2-5,11

God clearly states this fact. The nation had lost their love for God. The fragrant memory of Israel's love was haunted by the fact that it was only a memory. Their love had been active. It had been alive and well, but now it was dead. God says "I remember ...as a bride how you loved me." You were eager to please me. You followed me through the desert. You were holy to the Lord, but now you have you have forsaken me. In what way did they regress? How did this happen? What was it that contributed to the cooling off of their love for God? First of all it was their,

A.. Apostasy. Jeremiah 2:2-5 The dictionary defines apostasy as the as the "abandonment of one's religion." God said to His people. "You have forsaken me." This short phrase describes a tragic condition. God was heart broken and He had reason to be heartbroken. Had He given them a reason for their abandonment of Him ? He went over the list of all of those things He had done for them. If you read verses 4-7. you will discover a questioning God.

i. "This what the Lord says, What fault did your fathers find in me?", "that led them astray so far. They worshipped worthless idols.

ii. They did not ask "Where is the Lord, who brought us out of Egypt." And led us through terrible désert.

iii. I brought you into a fertile fruitful land which was the inheritance I promised you. The Priests did not ask 'where is the Lord?' The judges ignored me and the rulers turned against me. The prophets prophesied in the name of Baal following worthless

idols and “wasting their time on nonsense.”(N.L.T.)

God had transformed a ragged tattered group of slaves into a strong nation with a distinctive identity. And God says to them “I did all of this for you, why have you deserted me?” “What fault did your fathers find in me that they have turned their backs on me. What have I done to deserve this treatment?”

Is there a parallel for us in the Christian church? Is it possible that we could treat the Lord Jesus Christ that way? Yes it has happened down through the centuries. It is difficult to understand why we would do so. After all He suffered and died for us. He took upon Himself your sin and my sin. Indeed He became sin for us. What pain He bore! – What sacrifice He made for us! – What love He revealed to us!. The hymn writer was right that this kind of sacrifice should stir within us a love for Him who died for us. “Love so amazing so Divine, demands my soul my life my all.” There would be no hope of eternal life if He had not. What reason would there be to desert Him after all that He has done for us. I wonder if the Lord is asking you “What I have done that you have forsaken me in your heart? Do I deserve your halfhearted surrender when I gave myself so completely on a Cross for you? I have given you an everlasting love and yet you turn you back on it. Apostasy resulted in their cooling off of their love for God. the second reason was,

b. Idolatry. Jeremiah 2:5,11. “They have followed worthless idols.” And in verse 11 God says “My people have changed their Glory for worthless idols.” God knows the hearts of men better than they do. He knows that everyone has some kind of God in their lives. We are too sophisticated to carve out wooden idols or fashion golden images, but Martin Luther said it well, “Whatever the heart clings to, and whatever

your heart relies on, that is properly your God.” The decision in our day before us is not between atheism or faith in God. It is not the issue of God or no God. That is not our choice. The question is which God will we worship? Seaman was right when he wrote “The old gods never die, they don’t even fade away. They just change their masks and return with renewed and improved techniques for deceiving us, seducing us and destroying us. The ancients labeled their gods, so at least they were honest about it. They made gods of all sorts of things. They had Mars the god of war: Eros the god of pleasure: Narcissus, the god of self-glorification; Bacchus the god of liquor and so on. We haven’t eliminated false gods by getting modern or smart. These gods are still with us, and they not only make us in their own image, they will also destroy us. Many in our society are idolaters when we remember that anything or anyone that takes the place of God in our hearts is an idol and idolatry is a strong form of infidelity. God’s people had failed to drive out idolatry, as God had commanded them to do when they entered the land of Canaan. Now the question is “why had this happened?” Firstly,

i. They had failed to seek the Face of God. Jeremiah 2:6. They did not ask “where is the Lord who brought us out of Egypt? This speaks to us in New Testament terms a lack of communication with God and a lack of dependence on Him. They had turned to idols as the previous verse v. 5. indicates, and they worshipped those idols. v.5. When prayer and worship of the Lord is forgotten and forsaken in that moment apostasy, backsliding and idolatry begins. They did not ask “where is the Lord who brought us up out of Egypt?” Prayer was forgotten and that is where apostasy, backsliding and idolatry begins. It was where

love for God begins to fade until it is a dim memory of the past and we end up simply going through the motions. They did not ask “where is the Lord? for they had other gods upon whom they depended. They failed to seek the Face of God. Not only was this true but,

ii. They Failed to Teach the Truth of God. Jeremiah 2: 8. “The priest did not ask ‘Where is the Lord?’ Those who deal with the law did not know Me” Those who handled the law did not think it important enough to teach it. Love for God is not just an emotional moment in a worship service, it is a relationship based on integrity, truth and learning to understand God and His word. The word of God contains all that is necessary to knowing way to salvation, holiness and the Christian life. If we seek to find answers to philosophies of the world and psychological precepts we are on the downward trail. While I realize that there are those who would like to be entertained in the house of God, entertainment does not solve the problems or give the answers to the deepest issues of life. Entertainment will not give us the power to overcome evil in our lives, neither will it give us the nourishment necessary to dynamic spiritual growth and the strength to be victorious in our walk with God. The Israelites failed to learn the Word of God and forsook the Lord. They wanted easy gods who would cater to their desires. Not only was this true,

iii. They failed to keep the glory of God upon the nation, by deliberately choosing other gods. Jeremiah 2:11. They failed to seek the Face of God. They failed to teach the truth of God and they failed to keep the Glory of God. They did what the pagan nations hardly ever do. They forsook God for those who are not gods. V. 11. “Has a nation ever changed its gods? BUT my people have exchanged their Glory for

worthless idols. To turn from God to an idol is to lose the Glory of God upon their lives and the church. And so God's Word describes the regression of Israel's love for Him. Finally, God discusses the issue of,

3. THE RESTORATION OF THE LOVE THAT WAS. Jeremiah 2:19, 3:2, 9 21.

The fact the God wants to restore their love does not minimize,

a. The Seriousness of their Lost Love. Jeremiah 2:19,3:8-9,21.

How serious does God view a lost love for Him. What are the effects of it. What are the consequences of it. A lost love for God means a new love for something else or the introduction of a new god into life. That is a

transgression of the first commandment. And in this passage God makes quite clear what the consequences are. Jeremiah 2:19 "your wickedness will punish you, your backsliding will rebuke you. Chapter 3:8-9. "I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood." Most people would never think of committing physical adultery but think nothing about committing spiritual adultery. Idolatry is a form of adultery - spiritual adultery. In chapter 1 God says to His people "you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers." God is talking about the seriousness of losing our first love for him. But in spite of their condition, God is still concerned about,

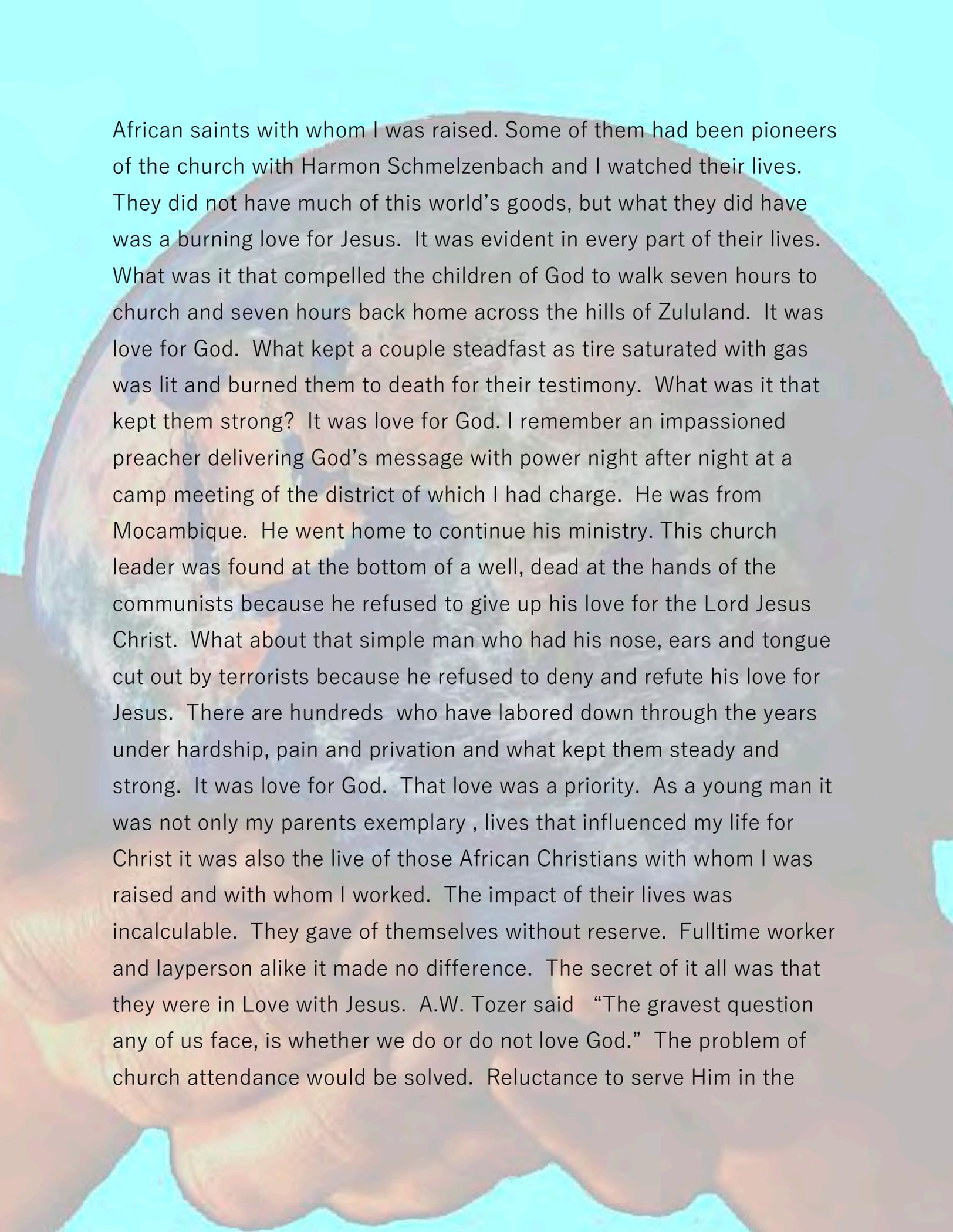
b. The Renewal of their Lost Love. Jeremiah 2:14,19.

The question comes to mind, “can this love be restored?” “Can it be regenerated?” “Can it be resurrected?” “Can it be renewed?” Or maybe there is a question that arises in our hearts. Will God accept the nation back? Are they redeemable or have they gone too far? Have they pushed beyond the limits of God’s love or the boundaries of His grace or the parameters of His mercy? Is the situation hopeless? Will God really forgive this sin of idolatry? The answers to these questions is found in God’s plea in Chapter 3:12. “Return fruitless Israel declares the Lord. I will frown on you no longer for I am merciful declares the Lord and 3 v19 How gladly would I treat you like sons and give a desirable land and again in 3:22. Return faithless people. I will cure you of your backsliding..’ again

and again God urges the nation to return to Him. God is always merciful and accepting of those who acknowledge their guilt, repent of their sin and their lukewarmness and return to Him.

Conclusion

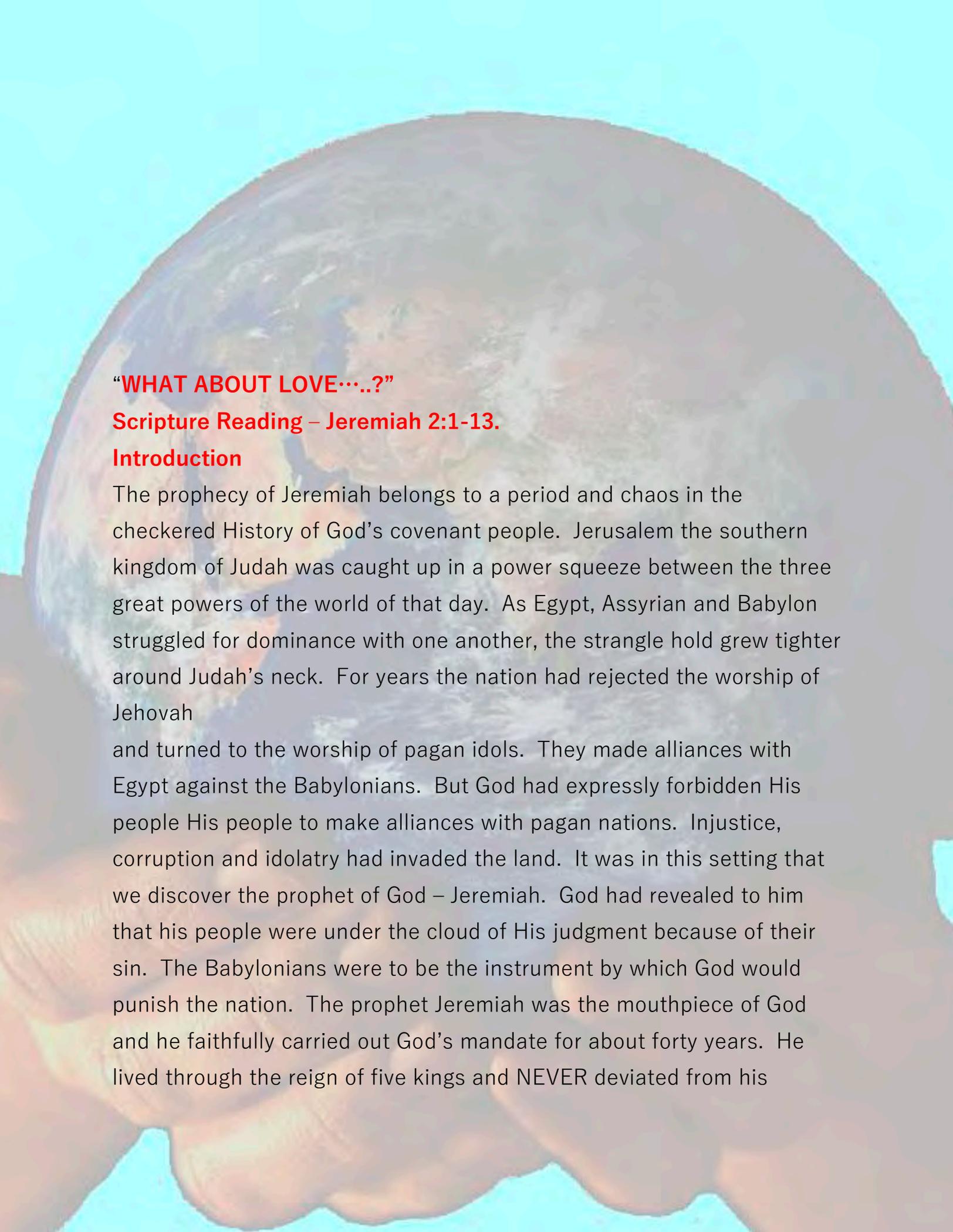
Our love for God is absolutely crucial and indispensable in a relationship with Him. Indeed it is impossible to have and maintain a relationship without it. The power of our witness and the ministry of the church is dependent on it. Love for God filters out to a love for men and women. My homeland is the Republic of South Africa. It is a country whose people I love deeply. I am in very real sense a product of the African church. As I look back at the incredible privilege of a unique background which had a profound influence on my life, I came to realize the incalculable power of Christian influence in the lives of Christians. Not just my parents but



African saints with whom I was raised. Some of them had been pioneers of the church with Harmon Schmelzenbach and I watched their lives. They did not have much of this world's goods, but what they did have was a burning love for Jesus. It was evident in every part of their lives. What was it that compelled the children of God to walk seven hours to church and seven hours back home across the hills of Zululand. It was love for God. What kept a couple steadfast as tire saturated with gas was lit and burned them to death for their testimony. What was it that kept them strong? It was love for God. I remember an impassioned preacher delivering God's message with power night after night at a camp meeting of the district of which I had charge. He was from Mocambique. He went home to continue his ministry. This church leader was found at the bottom of a well, dead at the hands of the communists because he refused to give up his love for the Lord Jesus Christ. What about that simple man who had his nose, ears and tongue cut out by terrorists because he refused to deny and refute his love for Jesus. There are hundreds who have labored down through the years under hardship, pain and privation and what kept them steady and strong. It was love for God. That love was a priority. As a young man it was not only my parents exemplary , lives that influenced my life for Christ it was also the live of those African Christians with whom I was raised and with whom I worked. The impact of their lives was incalculable. They gave of themselves without reserve. Fulltime worker and layperson alike it made no difference. The secret of it all was that they were in Love with Jesus. A.W. Tozer said "The gravest question any of us face, is whether we do or do not love God." The problem of church attendance would be solved. Reluctance to serve Him in the

church would be remedied. The problem of tithing would not be an issue. Joining a prayer group would be a joy. Soul winning would be a compulsion. Pastor you are being idealistic. I don't believe that. If we love Jesus these things would not be a burden. **DO YOU LOVE HIM?**





“WHAT ABOUT LOVE…..?”

Scripture Reading – Jeremiah 2:1-13.

Introduction

The prophecy of Jeremiah belongs to a period and chaos in the checkered History of God’s covenant people. Jerusalem the southern kingdom of Judah was caught up in a power squeeze between the three great powers of the world of that day. As Egypt, Assyrian and Babylon struggled for dominance with one another, the strangle hold grew tighter around Judah’s neck. For years the nation had rejected the worship of Jehovah

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The nation’s love for God was history and He was heartbroken about it. There is an unmistakable wistfulness – a distinct nostalgia in the words of God, which point to this disturbing tragedy in the nation. The Words of God spoken through Jeremiah are spoken in metaphorical language but they graphically describe the pain God feels at the loss of the nation’s love. “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of His harvest.” This is a clear expression of brokenness of God’s heart. It is clear that God wants love for Him to be of top priority. It is really what matters to him the most. He remembers and reminisces on the love that used be. It was love that kept them obedient as they traveled through the wilderness – through the barren wastes of the wilderness. The tragedy was that their love for Him was simply a fragrant memory of the past. It was love recorded, not love in reality. It was love as history and not love in the present. It was love written in the memoirs of the Book of God, but not love written in the hearts of his people. But God had not forgotten that love. The fact that God highlights it, is a clear indication of its importance to Him. For a relationship with Him is not founded on legislation. It is rooted in a love for Him. A relationship with out love has no vitality – no vigor – no health and no life. Now when God reminisces on the love of His people. He is reflecting,

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iii. I brought you into a fertile fruitful land which was the

inheritance I promised you. The Priests did not ask 'where is the Lord?" The judges ignored me and the rulers turned against me. The prophets prophesied in the name of Baal following worthless idols and "wasting their time on nonsense."(N.L.T.) God had transformed a ragged tattered group of slaves into a strong nation with a distinctive identity. And God

says to them "I did all of this for you, why have you deserted me?" "What fault did your fathers find in me that they have turned their backs on me. What have I done to deserve this treatment? Is there a parallel for us in the Christian church? Is it possible that we could treat the Lord Jesus Christ that way? Yes it has happened down through the centuries. It is difficult to understand why we would do so. After all He suffered and died for us. He took upon Himself your sin and my sin indeed He became sin for us. What pain He bore! – What sacrifice He made for us! – What love He revealed to us!. The hymn writer was right that this kind of sacrifice should stir within us a love for Him who died for us. "Love so amazing so Divine, demands my soul my life my all." There would be no hope of

eternal life if He had not. What reason would there be to desert Him after all that He has done for us. I wonder if the Lord is asking you "What I have done that you have forsaken me in your heart? Do I deserve your halfhearted surrender when I gave myself so completely on a Cross for you? I have given you an everlasting love and yet you turn you back on it. Apostasy resulted in their cooling off of their love for God. the second reason was,

b. Idolatry. Jeremiah 2:5,11. "They have followed worthless idols." And in verse 11 God says "My people have changed their Glory for worthless idols." God knows the

hearts of men better than they do. He knows that everyone has some kind of God in their lives. We are too sophisticated to carve out wooden idols or fashion golden images, but Martin Luther said it well, "Whatever the heart clings to, and whatever your heart relies on, that is properly your God. The decision in our day before us is not between atheism or faith in God. It is not the issue of God or no God. That is not our choice. The question is which God will we worship? Seamands was right when he wrote "The old gods never die, they don't even fade away. They just change their masks and return with renewed and improved techniques for deceiving us, seducing us and destroying us. The ancients labeled their gods, so at least they were honest about it. They made gods of all sorts of things. They had Mars the god of war: Eros the god of pleasure: Narcissus, the god of self-glorification; Bacchus the god of liquor and so on. We haven't eliminated false gods by getting modern or smart. These gods are still with us, and they not only make us in their own image, they will also destroy us. Many in our society are idolaters when we remember that anything or anyone that takes the place of God in our hearts is an idol and idolatry is a strong form of infidelity. God's people had failed to drive out idolatry, as God had commanded them to do when they entered the land of Canaan. Now the question is "why had this happened?" Firstly,

i. They had failed to seek the Face of God. Jeremiah 2:6. They did not ask "where is the Lord who brought us out of Egypt? This speaks to us in New Testament terms a lack of communication with God and a lack of dependence on Him. They had turned to idols as the previous verse v. 5. indicates, and they worshipped those idols. v.5. When prayer and worship of the Lord is forgotten and forsaken in that moment apostasy, backsliding and idolatry begins. It is us up out of Egypt?" They did not ask "where is the Lord who brought us up out of Egypt?" Prayer was forgotten and that is where apostasy, backsliding and idolatry begins. It was where love for God begins to fade until it is a dim memory of the past and we end up simply going through the motions. They did not ask "where is the Lord? for they had other gods upon whom they depended. They failed to seek the Face of God. Not only was this true but,

ii. They Failed to Teach the Truth of God. Jeremiah 2: 8. "The priest did not ask 'Where is the Lord?' Those who deal with the law did not know Me" Those who handled the law did not think it important enough to teach it. Love for God is not just an emotional moment in a worship service, it is a relationship based on integrity, truth and learning to understand God and His word. The word of God contains all that is necessary to knowing way to salvation, holiness and the Christian life. If we seek to find answers to philosophies of the world and psychological precepts we are on the downward trail. While I realize that there are those who would like to be entertained in the house of God, entertainment does not solve the problems or give the answers to the deepest issues of life. Entertainment

will not give us the power to overcome evil in our lives, neither will it give us the nourishment necessary to dynamic spiritual growth and the strength to be victorious in our walk with God. The Israelites failed to learn the Word of God and forsook the Lord. They wanted easy gods who would cater to their desires. Not only was this true,

iii. They failed to keep the glory of God upon the nation, by deliberately choosing other gods. Jeremiah 2:11. They failed to seek the Face of God. They failed to teach the truth of God and they failed to keep the Glory of God. They did what the pagan nations hardly ever do. They forsook God for those who are not gods. V. 11. "Has a nation ever changed its gods? BUT my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols. To turn from God to an idol is to lose the Glory of God upon their lives and the church. And so God's Word describes the regression of Israel's love for Him. Finally, God discusses the issue of,

3. THE RESTORATION OF THE LOVE THAT WAS. Jeremiah 2:19, 3:2, 9 21.

The fact the God wants to restore their love does not minimize,

a. The Seriousness of their Lost Love. Jeremiah 2:19,3:8-9,21.

How serious does God view a lost love for Him. What are the effects of it. What are the consequences of it. A lost love for God means a new love for something else or the introduction of a new god into life. That is a transgression of the first commandment. And in this passage God makes quite clear what the consequences are. Jeremiah 2:19 “your wickedness will punish you, your backsliding will rebuke you. Chapter 3:8-9. “I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. Because Israel’s immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood.” Most people would never think of committing physical adultery but think nothing about committing spiritual adultery. Idolatry is a form of adultery - spiritual adultery. In chapter 1 God says to His people “you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers.” God is talking about the seriousness of losing our first love for Him. But in spite of their condition, God is still concerned about,

b. The Renewal of their Lost Love. Jeremiah 2:14,19.

The question comes to mind, “can this love be restored?” “Can it be regenerated?” “Can it be resurrected?” “Can it be renewed?” Or maybe there is a question that arises in our hearts. Will God accept the nation back? Are they redeemable or have they gone too far? Have they pushed beyond the limits of God’s love or the boundaries of His grace or the parameters of His mercy? Is the situation hopeless? Will God really forgive this sin of idolatry? The answers to these questions is found in God’s plea in Chapter 3:12. “Return fruitless Israel declares the Lord. I will frown on you no longer for I am merciful declares the Lord and 3 v19 How gladly would I treat you like sons and give a desirable land and again in 3:22. Return faithless people. I will cure you of your backsliding..’ again and again God urges the nation to return to Him. God is always merciful and accepting of those who acknowledge their guilt, repent of their sin and their lukewarmness and return to Him.

Conclusion

Our love for God is absolutely crucial and indispensable in a relationship with Him. Indeed it is impossible to have and maintain a relationship without it. The power of our witness and the ministry of the church is dependent on it. Love for God filters out to a love for men and women. My homeland is the Republic of South Africa. It is a country whose people I love deeply. I am in very real sense a product of the African church. As I look back at the incredible privilege of a unique background which had a profound influence on my life, I came to realize the incalculable power of Christian influence in the lives of Christians. Not just my parents but African saints with whom I was raised. Some of them had been pioneers of the church with Harmon Schmelzenbach I watched their lives. They did not have much of this world’s goods, but what they did have was a burning love for Jesus. It was evident in every part of their lives. What was it that compelled the children of God to walk seven hours to church and seven hours back home across the hills of Zululand. It was love for God. What kept a couple steadfast as tire saturated with gas was lit and burned them to death for their testimony. What was it that kept them strong? It was love for God. I remember an impassioned preacher delivering God’s message with power night after night at a camp meeting of the district of which I had charge. He was from Mocambique. He went home to continue his ministry. This church leader was found at the bottom of a well, dead at the hands of the communists because he refused to give up his love for the Lord Jesus Christ. What about that simple man in Zimbabwe who had his nose, ears and tongue cut out because he refused to deny and refute his love for Jesus. There are hundreds who have labored down through the years under hardship, pain and privation and what kept them steady and strong. It was love for God. That love was a priority. As a young man it was not only my parents exemplary, lives that

influenced my life for Christ it was also the live of those African Christians with whom I was raised and with whom I worked. The impact of their lives was incalculable. They gave of themselves without reserve. Fulltime worker and layperson alike it made no difference. The secret of it all was that they were in Love with Jesus. A.W. Tozer said "The gravest question any of us face, is whether we do or do not love God." The problem of church attendance would be solved. Reluctance to serve Him in the church would be remedied. The problem of tithing would not be an issue. Joining a prayer group would be a joy. Pastor you are being idealistic. I don't believe that. If we love Jesus these things would not be a burden

