

Faithless And False

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[0 : 00] The Lord said to me, faithless Israel has shown herself less guilty than false Judah.

Now Jeremiah tells a little story to help illustrate his point of two sisters. And the older of the sisters was betrothed and had a husband that had provided for her, provided wealth for her, provided a home for her, provided servants for her, had provided everything for her.

And in her wealth and in her prosperity, she looked a very attractive woman indeed. But her neighbors coveted her.

They wanted her. Remember where it says, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife? Well, the neighbors coveted this woman. And, alas, she coveted them.

And so she gave up her home and her security and her wealth and her prosperity.

[1 : 22] She gave that all up and she became a vagabond. That is, she wandered around homelessly. Is there such a word?

Can you be homelessly? Anyway, that's how she wandered around. And the word that, the lovely word, I mean it's lovely in that it says something very clear and definite.

She was a harlot. Old fashioned word of the authorized version is a whore.

But we're too polite for that. But it means the same thing. She became a harlot. And she was prepared to enter into liaison with virtually anybody that came along.

Not only was she prepared to do that, but she was prepared to do it wherever she was. On a hill, in a veil, anywhere she met somebody, she was prepared immediately to enter into a sexual relationship with him.

[2 : 27] In which, presumably, she would find the fulfillment she was seeking and the partner would find the fulfillment he was seeking. And then they could tip their hats to one another and say goodbye.

Because nobody belonged to anybody. And she was totally unabashed by this. She wasn't secretive about it.

That was who she was. That was where she found fulfillment. She just thought the world was great. And she had no commitments of any kind to anybody. And so she carried on.

Well, her husband waited at home and said to himself, She will surely tire of this. She will surely come to the place where she knows that what I have to offer her is far better than anything she's going to find in the way of life that she's carrying on now.

They may be enthralled with her beauty and she may be enthralled with them. But that's going to pall after a while. And then she will come home. And so he waited.

[3 : 38] And waited. And waited. And waited. And waited. And she never came home. Her beauty faded.

She went into exile. She went into slavery. She went to death. And never returned.

That's the older sister. But there was a younger sister. And the younger sister watched what happened to her older sister.

She saw the whole process from the time she first left her home through all the whole period of degradation. And she saw it all happen.

She understood clearly the cause and effect process. Of her own sister's death. So she decided that for her things would be different.

[4 : 42] And so she became a harlot, vagabond too. And she was equally promiscuous.

And she developed liaisons with whoever came along. But she kept writing little notes to her husband saying, I'll be back soon.

I'll be there. Don't worry about me. I'll be back. And her husband waited. And she pretended. And she pretended.

And she pretended. That really it meant something to her. And that one day she would go back. And she gave the appearance of having gone back. But she didn't really. She carried on in the way she was going. And she too. Lost her beauty. Went into exile.

[5 : 41] To slavery. And to death. Now what Jeremiah says about this. Is that the older sister.

Was only faithless. The younger sister. Was false. Now. You got that picture firmly in mind. Let me go on. I want to talk to you about covenants now. For a few minutes. Because covenants are things that happen. If you go. And sell.

Some of the family heirlooms. To somebody. At one of the wonderful antique stores. In South Granville. They will give you. A tiny. Totally worthless.

Piece of paper. I mean. Paper isn't worth that much. But. This is more than a piece of paper. Because. It has the coat of arms of Canada. On it.

[6 : 39] And it says. This. This. Note. Is. Legal. Tender. And it is signed. By the governor.

Of the bank of Canada. So this. Is. A covenant. And the covenant. Is. That. That the value of this. Will be maintained. And that.

Though it is. In fact. Only a piece of paper. It has a value. Because there is. A covenant. Behind it. Now. Of course. The difficulty.

With our country. Today. Is that our covenants. Are falling apart. You know. Even the value. Of our money. Is. We're afraid.

Being destroyed. The covenants. Are falling apart. The covenant. Between French. And English. In Canada. Is falling apart. The covenant. Between the aboriginal.

[7 : 33] People. And the other people. Of Canada. Is falling apart. The covenant. Between male. And female. In our society. Is falling apart. The covenant.

Between eastern. Canada. And western. Canada. Is falling apart. All the covenants. Are breaking down. To some.

We are being. Faithless. And to some. We are being. False. But they're breaking down. What we try. And do. As a congregation. This morning.

And in this month. Of November. Is to renew. The covenants. By which we live together. As a congregation. That makes it possible. For us to meet here.

From Sunday. To Sunday. To worship. And we enter. Into little covenants. With Peggy Friesen. About teaching. Sunday school. Or with Ed Norman. About singing. In the choir. Or with.

[8 : 30] With Dave McMillan. About serving. On one of the church. Committees. We enter into. A whole lot. Of covenants. You are all. Invited. To enter into. A covenant. To provide.

This financial support. For next year. By using. Your pledge card. That's a covenant. That we want you. To sign. And bring. Next Sunday. Those are. The tiny covenants.

By which life. Is made possible. For us. As a congregation. And serious. Membership. In this congregation. Involves you. From time to time.

Entering into. Covenants like that. They're necessary. But. Perhaps. They're not essential. In every case. But.

You see. Ah. But. You see. This morning. What we are renewing. Is. The great covenant. The covenant.

[9 : 27] Which. Which we have. With God. The covenant. We entered into. By baptism. The covenant. Which is sustained. By our having.

A common meal. Together. So that we enter into covenant. Not only with God. But we enter into covenant. With one another. By sharing that loaf. That is up there.

We come together. Into. A covenant. You know. That this book. Here. Is divided. Into two parts. And one is called.

The old covenant. And one part. Is called. The new covenant. You will know. That. When Jesus Christ. Sat.

With his disciples. At the last supper. He held up. The cup. Of wine. And said. This cup. Is the new covenant.

[10 : 22] In. My. Blood. It was a covenant. To which he was committed. To death. Totally committed. To this new covenant.

God. And that's the cup. That is offered you. That. Our Lord Jesus Christ. Is totally committed. To you.

Guess what the meaning. Of your taking that cup. And drinking it means. That's what it does mean. It's renewing. The great.

Covenant. We do it all the time. It's not really unfamiliar to us. I suspect. That when we gather. Around. At Christmas time.

And stand around the fire. And the drinks are poured. And somebody says. Cheers. We're sort of entering into. A kind of social covenant. At least for the evening.

[11:20] With one another. We're used to making covenants. Some of them more serious. Than others as I might. Try to point out to you. But those are the covenants.

We. We enter into. Now the danger is. In our society. That a lot of people.

Have chosen. To enter into a covenant. With nobody. But themselves. That's all. They don't want any other relationship.

They don't want to be found. In a congregation. Like this. Because it implies. A covenant. That they're not prepared. To come under. They generally. Continue to use this.

Which involves. The covenant. But. They would like to break. The structure. On which it's based. Very often. This covenant. With ourselves. Without regard.

[12:16] For anybody. Or anything. For our neighbor. Or anyone else. Is one that we like. To enter into. Freedom. Freedom.

We say. Is to be under. No covenant. Whatever. Just like the older sister. A total. Spiritual.

Vagabond. Who picks up. With one person. After another. Who says. When they say goodbye. To one. There's another one. Come. And that's the way.

They live their lives. Totally. Vagabond. Spiritual. And looking for another liaison. That will take its place. And those people.

Think that they are under. No covenant. But they are under. A dreadful. And inescapable covenant. Covenant. Covenant. And that covenant.

[13:13] Is. With. Death. And. Death. Won't. Let them down. It will keep. Its covenant. That's why you see.

When we talk about. This covenant. This is a covenant. Of life. This isn't a covenant. With death. This is a covenant.

With life. And when you are. Faithless. To this covenant. Then it means. The only covenant. You have. Is with death. I.

Don't want to labor. This point. But. I would like. Just to suggest. In passing. That every home. And every family. Is based. On a covenant.

And when that covenant. Breaks down. Then separation. Ensews. And separation. Is. A picture. Of what death means.

[14:13] Because death. Is separation. And. I tell you that. Knowing. That statistics. In our parish.

There are far more. Single people. Than there are married people. Who don't have. A covenant. As yet. At least. And perhaps.

The covenant. They had. Is no longer. In effect. And I would like. To say. That for them. It is even more. Important. That they renew.

Their basic covenant. With life. When some of the other. Covenants. In their lives. Have broken down. Don't.

Turn. As the older sister. Did. Faithlessly. Away. But. Renew. The covenant. With life. That's the business. You have.

[15:08] Death. Well. The older sister. Was. Faithless. And just never. Even. Thought. Of entering. Into a covenant.

Abandoned. Every covenant. That she had. And ended up. With exile. Slavery. And death. The younger sister. Pretended. And I want to tell you.

Very solemnly. That Jeremiah says. The younger sister. Was far worse. Than the older sister. Because she pretended.

She was false. To the covenant. And you see. I tell you that. With great solemnity. Because. We may take part.

In this covenant. Renewal. This morning. As we do. Every Sunday. We may take part. Take part. In that covenant. Just.

[16:05] Pretending. And. That's really hard. It's hard.

For all of us. It's destructive. It can shatter. This whole. Congregation.

If we are false. To the covenant. That we belong to. That we enter into. If we pretend. Well. The husband was left. The picture of the covenant. Is left with. The one sister. Who was faithless. To it. And the other sister. That was false. And so.

What's going to happen. What can we do. Because most of us. Know what it means. To be faithless. To a covenant. And most of us.

[17:04] Know what it means. To be false. To a covenant. And most of us. Know. In our hearts. That we have the capacity.

To be either. Or both. Faithless. And false. Faithless. Something has to be done. Well. What has to be done. Is what is spoken of. In that verse. That I read. At the beginning. Of the service. This morning. And I'm going to read again. Listen to this.

You see. Because this comes. From Jeremiah 2. God is going to take action. This is the covenant. The Lord says.

The Lord is speaking. This is the covenant. I will make. With the house of Israel. That's the older sister. This is. And. This is the covenant.

[17:58] That I will make. With the house of Israel. After those days. I will put my law. Within them. I will write it. I will write it upon their hearts.

And later on. In the same chapter. Jeremiah. The Lord says. If you think. That you can break. The covenant. With day. So that the dawn. Doesn't come.

Or you can break. The covenant. With night. So that evening. Never comes. Then you can break. This covenant. But that's the only way. The only possibility.

He says. I will write it. Upon their hearts. I will be their God. They shall be my people. No longer. Shall each one. Teach his neighbor.

Each his brother. Saying. Know the Lord. For they shall all know me. From the least of them. To the greatest. Says the Lord. For I will forgive. Their iniquity.

[18:54] And I will remember. Their sin. No more. And so. As God. Has entered into this.

New covenant. With us. He doesn't depend upon. Your. Faithless heart. He doesn't depend upon. Your false pretense. God. Depends upon. And we are dependent upon.

A new covenant. Which is written. In your heart. So that when you act out. Of who you are. Not in yourself. But by the grace and mercy of God. Revealed to you in Jesus Christ. The new covenant. Into which you are called. Through the blood of Christ.

[19:48] Through the death and resurrection. Of Jesus Christ. When that covenant. Is written in your heart. In your heart. Then. You'll know where you are. And there will be nothing more important to you.

Than the thing which you most deeply long for. The fulfillment of that covenant. With God. Through Jesus Christ. Should be renewed.

And renewed. And renewed. And renewed. Through the whole of your life. And you. And I. Are invited together. To come to the Lord's table.

On this. The Lord's day. To renew. The covenant. The covenant we have. With God. Through Christ.

With one another. Amen. Amen.