

Facets of Unfaithfulness

1. Study Jeremiah 2:20-26. Who is Jeremiah speaking to here? What is the historical context of this passage?

Jeremiah ben-Hilkiah is speaking to the nation of Judah. In his first message to the nation, he is preparing to pronounce God's judgment for their apostasy and failure to honor their commitment to the Mosaic Covenant. Since the time of Solomon, the Jews have fallen further and further away from God, resulting in years of discord and loss of independence to various pagan empires (Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian).

2. What spiritual condition is Jeremiah speaking of? What are the facets of this condition?

Once believing in the living God and making a commitment to His Covenant, the nation of Judah failed to worship Him and degenerated to a nation who did not know Him. Jeremiah was describing the spiritual condition of Judah's unfaithfulness, and he used imagery to describe the various facets of their apostasy.

Draft Animal

Jeremiah's statement, "For long ago I broke your yoke and tore off your bonds; but you said, 'I will not serve!'", is a reference to the freedom from 400 years of Egyptian bondage. Later, just prior to entering the Promised Land, the nation of Israel made a commitment to the Mosaic Covenant; however, God predicted that the nation would not keep their word (Deut 31:16-22). Unwilling to follow and serve God, unfaithfulness is associated with **disobedience**.

Harlot

Jeremiah's statement, "For on every high hill and under every green tree you have lain down as a harlot," was a direct reference to the various locations of Judah's shrines of idolatrous worship (ie. "high hill"). Despite the Mosaic Covenant, Judah violated the Lord's trust by forsaking its covenantal relationship to pursue the worship of any god for personal safety, health, and prosperity. Unfaithfulness is associated with **infidelity and a breach of trust**.

Degenerate Shoots of a Foreign Vine

In this imagery, Jeremiah comments on the cause of unfaithfulness. In an alluded reference to grape cultivation where good fruits come from good vines, the bad fruits of disobedience and infidelity arise from "degenerate shoots," which he distinguishes further as from "a foreign vine." Through Jeremiah, God asks, "How then have you turned yourself before Me?"

Roughly 800 years earlier, on the plains of Moab, the second generation of Israelites stood poised to cross the Jordan River. They were the replacement to the first generation that disbelieved and were purged after 40 years of wandering. Now respectful and committed to the Lord, the new generation entered the Promised Land as the "choice vine and faithful seed". But through succeeding generations, their fruits of apostasy revealed hearts that were foreign to the Lord. Unfaithfulness is associated with **hearts irreverent towards God**.

Stain

In this statement, "Although you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your iniquity is before Me," God's use of imagery reveals the indelible aspect of sin. Note: the Israelites recognized their sin; however, they chose to cleanse themselves in their way, not God's. Had Judah kept the Mosaic Covenant, the Israelites would have known God's process to cover their sin.

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In their attempt to deny their sin, Judah was confronted with their actions in the Valley of Hinnom where infant sacrifice was committed in the worship of other gods. Unfaithfulness is associated with **the lack of a moral standard and the denial of sin.**

Swift Young Female Camel

In response to Judah's denial of committing any sin, the metaphor of a young camel "entangling her ways" portrays a nation who is without guidance and spiritually unwise and acts impulsively with reckless abandon. Unfaithfulness is associated with **a lack of wisdom and self-control.**

Wild Donkey in Heat

God's use of imagery of the wild donkey in heat alludes to two aspects of animals in heat: 1) strong passionate desire, and 2) receptivity to any who would fulfill their needs. When used in association with the Valley of Hinnom, it conveyed the depth of passion and zeal that it took to sacrifice one's child in the worship of idols. Unfaithfulness is associated with **ignorance of true worship and behavior ruled by one's feelings and emotions.**

Thief

The comparison to a thief emphasizes the deceit of unfaithfulness; instead of being remorseful of the wrongness of the sinful act, the thief is more fearful of being caught and exposed. Judah was more concerned of their image of being unfaithful rather than the act of that was unfaithful. Unfaithfulness is associated with **the denial of unfaithfulness.**

Jeremiah illustrates the various facets of unfaithfulness towards God with the use of imagery and metaphors:

Draft Animal	Disobedience
Harlot	Infidelity and a breach of trust
Degenerate Shoots of a Foreign Vine	Hearts irreverent towards God
Stain	The lack of a moral standard and the denial of sin
Swift Young Female Camel	A lack of wisdom and self-control
Wild Donkey in Heat	Ignorance of true worship and behavior ruled by one's feelings and emotions
Thief	The denial of unfaithfulness

At times, drawing relevant lessons from these Old Testament passages can be difficult. For example, no one today practices child sacrifice as Judah did in the Valley of Hinnom. But do we sacrifice our child's time to the television or video while we pursue our own passions? Do we spend our personal time to teach our children to how to love and cherish our God? Are we good examples to our children? Are we more concerned about being exposed as unfaithful with total disregard for the acts of unfaithfulness? Unfaithfulness became a practice over time and was passed down through the generations.

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