**First Things First**

 **ABC’s of The Christian Life**

*Keeping the Great Commandment*

*Or, What if I don’t love God?*

 Jeremiah 2:1-13; 3:12-15; 4:1-4

**The Problem:** My love for God has been replaced by competing loves.

“My people have changed my glory for that which does not profit.”

 The history of Israel shows that we are born idolaters, and left to ourselves, quickly turn away to whatever looks to “make us happy,” or just help us deal with life in a fallen world. Like the gods of Canaan who demanded child sacrifices, the demands of our own idols are great: our purity, integrity, family, health, even truth, since we lie to ourselves. “None is righteous. . . no one seeks God.” Romans 3:10, 11

**The Reason:** Independence, obstinance, pride, hard thoughts of God.

“Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods?”

 We sin for the same reasons Adam and Eve sinned. They believed the lie that God was holding out on them, withholding the best from them, and in short, did not love them. We desire to be gods of our own kingdom, not stewards of God’s. We know, better than the God who made us, what is best for us. “You have brought us into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” Exodus 16:3

**The Result:** Dissatisfaction, restlessness, and no peace.

“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.”

 The image of a broken cistern says it all. Water leaks out, leaving you thirsty, and the search begins all over again. Frustration and restlessness plague all who seek their ultimate satisfaction in anything but God. “Why spend money. . . for what does not satisfy?” Isaiah 55:2

**How grace works:** Rejoicing in past grace inspires greater faith in God.

“They did not say, ‘Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt?’”

 Jeremiah is saying that Israel should have looked back and reasoned, “Well, God delivered our forefathers with power and grace, and now we will trust Him to do the same for us.” If we will but remember the promises and past gifts of God, we can apply the same pattern to our present temptations and trials. Grace begets grace John 1:16). This is the psalmist’s experience: Psalm 50:14–15 (NRSV)

 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,

 and pay your vows to the Most High. (Deliverance “A”)

 Call on me in the day of trouble;

 I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” (Deliverance “B”)

**The Solution:** A receptive heart, a new or renewed “taste” for God.

“Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among the thorns.”

 “I will not look upon you in anger, for I am merciful.”

 “Fallow ground” is land that has rested for a year or two without a crop. That land would have formed a weed infested, thick top soil crust which would have to be broken up by a plow or by hand. The result would be soil where seed could be sown, yielding a harvest. This is the background for Jesus’ parable in Matthew 13:18-23. It is only the heart that hears the word and obeys it that has spiritual life.

 Softening our heart and going to God ALWAYS obtains grace. God delights to forgive and show mercy and desires to glorify Himself by showing grace. The Bible is packed with such invitations. Isaiah 1:18-20; 55:1-9; Hosea 14:1-4; Matthew 11:28-30; John 6:35-40; 7:37, 38; Revelation 22:17; *etc.*

Our love for God appears, grows, and transforms us as we see His acts of redemption coming from His gracious nature, personally counting on Him to keep His promise of forgiveness and eternal life.