



The **Fiery** Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

Text

Jeremiah 31:1-40

Topic

God illustrates His everlasting love
by showing how He continually draws you to Himself

Title

"Our God is a Drawsome God"

Introduction

A group of kids aged four through eight were asked the question, "What does love mean to you?" Here are three of their answers.

- "Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other."
- "Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your french fries without making them give you any of theirs."
- "I let my big sister pick on me because my mom says she only picks on me because she loves me. So I pick on my baby sister because I love her."

In the classic (but awful movie), *Love Story*, love meant "never having to say you're sorry." Paul McCartney sang, "in the end the love you take is equal to the love you make."

It's clear "love" is hard to define and means different things to different people.

God says in our text, "I have loved you with an **everlasting love**" (v3). If human love is hard to define and means different things to different people, it stands to reason it would be even harder to grasp God's love and harder still to grasp "everlasting" love.

God wants us to grasp His everlasting love and He gives us enough of an illustration in His dealings with Israel so that we can.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Since God's Love For You Is Everlasting He's Determined To Draw & Keep On Drawing You To Himself, and #2 Since God's Love For You Is Everlasting He Desires To Fill & Keep On Filling You With Himself.

#1 Since God's Love For You Is Everlasting
He's Determined To Draw & Keep Drawing You To Himself
(v1-26)

We can look back at all God's dealings with His people, the Jews, and see His drawing them. No matter what they did, no matter how far they strayed, He kept on drawing them to Himself. This "drawing" to Himself is the very heart of "everlasting love."

Jeremiah 31:1 "At the same time," says the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people."

Jeremiah 31:2 Thus says the LORD: "The people who survived the sword Found grace in the wilderness Israel, when I went to give him rest."

The Lord could be talking about the original Exodus of Israel from Egypt but most likely these verses are about the northern kingdom of Israel which had already been taken captive by the Assyrians a hundred years prior. Some "survived the sword [and] found grace in the wilderness" as The Lord gave them "rest."

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

"Of old" is a way of saying that God's nature doesn't change from age to age. Love - everlasting love - is how He relates to the human race.

What kind of love lets Israel be overrun by the Assyrians? God saw that they needed to be disciplined or all of them would be lost. They had abandoned Him. He would "draw" them back to Himself with "lovingkindness." Here "lovingkindness" means both *patience* and *mercy*. God was patient as He waited for Israel to repent. He was merciful to step in and discipline all of them before it was too late to save any of them.

We sometimes speak of 'tough love,' do we not? God's everlasting love is tough, but it's never harmful; it's patient and merciful in drawing back sinners to Himself.

Listen as God describes the effect of His discipline to ultimately draw Israel back to the land and to blessing.

Jeremiah 31:4 Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, And shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.

Israel was guilty of serial spiritual adultery. Yet God still saw her, in the future, as a virgin. Everlasting love extends grace with cleansing and healing.

Jeremiah 31:5 You shall yet plant vines on the mountains of Samaria; The planters shall plant and eat them as ordinary food.

Jeremiah 31:6 For there shall be a day When the watchmen will cry on Mount Ephraim, 'Arise, and let us go up to Zion, To the LORD our God.' "

Jeremiah 31:7 For thus says the LORD: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, And shout among the chief of the nations; Proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O LORD, save Your people, The remnant of Israel!'

Jeremiah 31:8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country, And gather them from the ends of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child And the one who labors with child, together; A great throng shall return there.

Jeremiah 31:9 They shall come with weeping, And with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn.

Jeremiah 31:10 "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, And declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.'

Jeremiah 31:11 For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, And ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he.

Jeremiah 31:12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, Streaming to the goodness of the LORD For wheat and new wine and oil, For the young of the flock and the herd; Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden, And they shall sorrow no more at all.

Jeremiah 31:13 "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, And the young men and the old, together; For I will turn their mourning to joy, Will comfort them, And make them rejoice rather than sorrow.

Jeremiah 31:14 I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance, And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the LORD."

"Ephraim" is shorthand for the ten northern tribes that comprised Israel when the nation split. This restoration of Israel looks beyond our own time to the time of the kingdom of God on the earth. It's after our church age and after the seven year Great Tribulation at the return of Jesus in His Second Coming.

It is certain to happen and God's everlasting love will continue to draw Israel through human history into the promised kingdom.

Jeremiah 31:15 Thus says the LORD: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more."

"Ramah" was a town five miles north of Jerusalem. It was often the staging point for foreign invasions. Jeremiah was picturing the weeping of the women of the Northern Kingdom as they watched their children being carried into exile in 722BC.

You recognize these verses because they are quoted by Matthew in his Gospel at the time Herod slaughtered all the infants seeking to kill Jesus. The pain of those mothers in Ramah who watched their sons being carried into exile was expressed in the cries of the mothers of Bethlehem who cradled their sons' lifeless bodies in their arms.

Jeremiah 31:16 Thus says the LORD: "Refrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears; For your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, And they shall come back from the land of the enemy.

Jeremiah 31:17 There is hope in your future, says the LORD, That your children shall come back to their own border.

As the women of Israel wept for their exiled children, God offered a word of comfort. There was hope for their future because their descendants would return to their own land.

"There is hope in your future" is a great word of encouragement for every believer. It is always true no matter the circumstances in the present.

Jeremiah 31:18 "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: 'You have chastised me, and I was chastised, Like an untrained bull; Restore me, and I will return, For You are the LORD my God.

Jeremiah 31:19 Surely, after my turning, I repented; And after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, Because I bore the reproach of my youth.'

Jeremiah 31:20 Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the LORD.

Jeremiah 31:21 "Set up signposts, Make landmarks; Set your heart toward the highway, The way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, Turn back to these your cities.

Jeremiah 31:22 How long will you gad about, O you backsliding daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth - A woman shall encompass a man."

God's discipline was necessary and, in the case of Israel, it would prove effective at bringing about repentance.

No matter how far they strayed, no matter how great their sin, in His everlasting love God always drew them back, and He will in the future draw them back, to Himself.

The next four verses say the same about southern kingdom of Judah.

Jeremiah 31:23 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "They shall again use this speech in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I bring back their captivity: 'The LORD bless you, O home of justice, and mountain of holiness!'

Jeremiah 31:24 And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all its cities together, farmers and those going out with flocks.

Jeremiah 31:25 For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul."

Despite their idolatry, their harlotry, their oppression of the poor, their injustices, their child sacrifices - God will draw them back in His everlasting love.

Jeremiah 31:26 After this I awoke and looked around, and my sleep was sweet to me.

Everlasting love is love that never gives up, that is always drawing us to God and, when necessary, back to God through the lovingkindness of discipline.

We're to understand that God spoke this to Jeremiah in a dream. It was a word of prophecy conveyed in a dream.

Everlasting love is love that never gives up, that is always drawing us to God and, when necessary, back to God through the lovingkindness of discipline.

As a play on words I'm calling God 'drawsome.' Truth is, Jesus said that on the Cross He would draw **all** men to Himself (John 12:32). It doesn't mean all will be saved; it means that His death and resurrection are sufficient to save whosoever will believe in Him.

Should we sin so God can draw us back? No; **never!** For one thing His drawing back isn't pleasant; it wasn't for Israel in the past and it won't be in the future. The testimony of many backsliders who have been drawn back is that God allowed something quite severe to bring them back - often something that has lifelong consequences.

It's better to not need drawing back. But it's awesome to realize God loves you with an everlasting love that cannot leave you alone. You can resist it - even for your entire life if you're stubborn. But He will nonetheless be after you, to restore you.

God doesn't just want you. He wants the best for you.

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#2 Since God's Love For You Is Everlasting He Desires To Fill & Keep Filling You With Himself

(v27-40)

In the remaining verses we're going to read about what is called the New Covenant. It's... pretty cool!

Jeremiah 31:27 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.

Jeremiah 31:28 And it shall come to pass, that as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD.

Their sin and refusal to repent made it necessary to "pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy and afflict."

You say it seems too harsh? How would it be if God had let Israel and Judah go their way without discipline. They'd have long ago passed off the pages of history and all the promises of God would have failed. No Jews mean no Jesus.

In His everlasting love, although they have been scattered and oppressed, He has preserved them and will "build and... plant" them again.

God has already gone a long way toward fulfilling His promises. Israel has been in her land as a nation again since 1948. God is setting the stage to fulfill the rest of His New Covenant to them.

Jeremiah 31:29 In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge.'

Jeremiah 31:30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

The Jews had resigned themselves to a philosophy that God punished the children for the sins of their fathers - *so they might as well go on sinning!*

One modern version of this is to blame sin on a syndrome, or on someone else - *anything* or *anyone* by whom we can say, "it's not my fault." Each of us answers to God and are without excuse.

Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -

Jeremiah 31:32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

The term "New Covenant" indicates the current one was going to be superseded. The then current, or "old," covenant was the one made at Mount Sinai when God gave Israel the Law. Israel "broke" that covenant over-and-over. In His everlasting love God continued to be faithful to them, like a husband staying true to an ever-adulterous wife.

Jeremiah 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

God's New Covenant will internalize the Law in a way that will give every believer the empowering to obey His righteous standards.

The Jews were constantly under a burden to try to interpret and follow the Law. There were hundreds of rules and several schools of thought on how to follow them. To think that somehow you would immediately know God's will and perform it apart from an external standard was something very new and radical.

Jeremiah 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Under the Law you could only approach God through the mediation of a priest. When priests were not serving in the Temple they were scattered about so they could "teach" the people about God. After centuries of Temple life God was telling the Jews that there would be no priests as mediators and teachers under the New Covenant.

If we were Jews living under the Law we'd be stunned by the thought there were no priests. How would we offer sacrifices for our sins without a priest? No worries - "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Wow. This is just enough information to understand that God was going to do away with the entire system which only temporarily covered sins and required the continual sacrificing of animals as your substitute. What would replace it?

Not what, but **Who**. Jesus Christ would offer Himself as the lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. He would be the one final offering for sin that perfectly satisfied God's holiness.

Faith in Him would bring the other two benefits of the New Covenant - immediate access to God with no human mediator and the internal power to walk with God.

Although the ultimate fulfillment of the New Covenant is for Israel at the Second Coming of Jesus the church today is already experiencing it. The Jews rejected it when they rejected Jesus, but His death and resurrection inaugurated the New Covenant.

When Jesus died the veil in the Temple at Jerusalem was torn from top to bottom. It signified that you had immediate access to God and that the system of sacrifices for sin was ended. After He rose from the dead Jesus breathed on His disciples and they received the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We have immediate access to God without a mediator; we have the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins; and we enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to empower us to obey God.

Jeremiah 31:35 Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name):

Jeremiah 31:36 "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever."

Jeremiah 31:37 Thus says the LORD: "If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel For all that they have done, says the LORD.

When the sun no longer rises and the moon no longer affects tides, then God will fail Israel... *Which means He never will.* Throughout history people have tried in vain to destroy Israel, but none have succeeded - and none ever will.

Jeremiah 31:38 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that the city shall be built for the LORD - from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.

Jeremiah 31:39 The surveyor's line shall again extend straight forward over the hill Gareb; then it shall turn toward Goath.

Jeremiah 31:40 And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields as far as the Brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be holy to the LORD. It shall not be plucked up or thrown down anymore forever."

Jerusalem will be the capital not just of Israel but of the world at the return of Jesus.

A major benefit of the New Covenant is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Right now, today, *any* and *every* believer has the Holy Spirit.

In His everlasting love God desires to fill you with Himself and go on filling you. You **can** live the Christian life; and when you consider you have immediate access to the throne of God and the assurance that every sin is forgiven at the Cross, you *want* to live the Christian life. It's the only reasonable response to God's drawing, filling, everlasting love for you.