

Return You Backsliding People

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[0 : 00] with God's help, of course, there is no point in attempting anything that belongs to God with His own strength and His own encouragement and His own presence to be with us here.

We go back to that portion of scripture that we read in Jeremiah chapter 3 and we read at verse 22, although we will refer to other bits of it and other chapters as well, where it says, return ye backsliding children and I will heal you backsliding. Behold, we come unto thee, they say, for thou art the Lord our God. Return ye backsliding children, I will heal you, for thou art the Lord our God. That is the essence of the matter here, but we have to go round it and spread around it a bit to understand why Jeremiah is saying this, because we know that

Jeremiah is a prophet that lived in a time very like our own time, where the country and everything seemed to be all over the place. So it was important, as we said in the prayer, that it was important that there was a God's man for God's message in God's time. And that is where we meet Jeremiah here.

He isn't, somebody said that the difference between a person who more or less propels himself into the ministry and the person who is called into the ministry is that the person who has self-propelled to do this and has a wish to do this, can leave the flock without thinking twice about it and having no concerns for the flock and finish off with the preaching. But the called person of God is called in such a way that he cannot do that. His calling keeps him there to the bitter end.

And there is a marked difference in that because Jesus said that to us in the shepherd in John chapter 10 there he said regarding the sheep he said hear my voice, but he says they will not understand the voice of the one who is a Highling.

[3 : 20] Because the Highling isn't concerned about them that much. He is more concerned about himself than he is about the cause of Jesus Christ in that midst. So he drops them and leaves them and they are ravished away by the wolves and all these things. And these are all just little sites as to what this means. Jeremiah was a called servant of God. In chapter 1 he said before he says I formed you, that's God's saying before I formed you. He tells us back into a friend eternity. And that is what is at the heart of us here in this space that we have that we call life between two immense eternities. And he says here he says before I formed them I knew thee. And before he says they came forth out of the womb I sanctified you. I set you apart for this reason and I ordained thee as a prophet. Now there is no escaping in that type of situation. This is what he had to do and nobody in their senses would envy him because of the situation that the land was in at that time. Israel had gone to bondage and now Judah is right on their heels because Israel played with God. They didn't think it was important.

They thought they could do what they liked with him. And this is not the case when there is no prophet and there is no direction, no judge. Everybody does what is right in their own eyes.

And that is why we find ourselves in the situation that we find ourselves in in our land today.

Because this very one has been removed out from the thinking of the majority of people.

So we are going to secularize the system and build it up on that type of what I think and not on what God is saying to me that he thinks. And Jeremiah has to do this he says and he says he doesn't give him an option as to what he's going to do. He said whatever I command you to do or to speak then he says you will speak that. So we I think we need to go back and examine ourselves in the light of scripture that that is the type of thinking and that's the type maybe a preacher that you don't want or maybe that is the type of preacher that you do want. But a lot of people of places don't want preachers who speak about the truth and speak about sin especially.

An American evangelist was asked about the congregation that he had himself. A big congregation he said he says how did you manage that he said well he said I never said mention sin.

[7:01] That's the answer I never mentioned. He mentions everything else but not the real essence of the matter because that is what we have here as the heart of the matter here is the problem of the heart is the heart of the problem. And we hear him here coming because what was happening here was that Judah who had broken away from Israel prior to this and had gone their own way after Solomon's day he's on about bringing them back again together one day one day and in that he is saying that it is possible for him to do that but he can't do that until he cleanses them until he warns them about the precarious position that they are in and where they are heading for.

It's easy to come here and to say well everybody goes to heaven but do you believe that? Do you believe that? Well my dear friend don't be deluded into thinking that that is the case.

There has to be a change in our lives. There has to be a work of grace in our lives, a work of the spirit of God in our lives, Father, Son and Holy Spirit working in our lives to cleanse us out and to make us fit vessels for him. Say what they were doing here Judah and Israel before them. They were two timing God. They were playing behind God's back they thought they were and that is why he refers to the language that we had there as he starts off by saying if a man put away his wife and things like that. It's an illustration, it is a picture of what how he sees it and how far wrong that is from where he wants them to be.

The relationship with God had broken down and that is why Paul says in the New Testament all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. What about me? What about this fellow?

What about me? I'm different to that. No, there's no difference. All have sinned and all have come short. That is why Christ came and the grace of God is sin in him coming into this life to face that situation that was beyond man to rectify, to correct and that is where we find ourselves here.

[10:18] Here are people who and God himself says they have forgotten me the iniquity says and neither said they where is the Lord that brought us out of Egypt. Remember the night in Egypt when they cried their eyes out to the Lord and they wanted out from under the tyranny of Egypt and everything that was going against them and probably they vowed then that if they got out of it then how good a people they would be after that but it didn't work like that. It doesn't work like that because they soon forgot that they walked after vanity and are become vain. That is the person who walks after vanity he becomes vain and that because there is no content in him to counter that.

Where is the Lord? He said why don't you ask that? Why don't they ask themselves? Where is this God? Surely have you forgotten this is already what I said and how I dealt with you?

Have you forgotten the covenant that I made with you? He said it was a never-lasting covenant. I come Jesus said that they might have life and have everlasting life and have something that can never be destroyed or can't be dissolved or taken apart in any way. You know that's what we were here for. In the light of this there is a gospel message in this as well. There is a gospel message that but he doesn't say to them well you went your way go ahead and finished with you now.

He doesn't do that because he doesn't deal with us according to our sins or if he was to mark our sins against us who could stand who could stand but with him there is forgiveness.

There is forgiveness and that is the wonderful thing that is what's on offer here although he is searching them out although he is he is saying hard things to them but it is in in the hope of bringing them round from the vanity and the vain things of life to see it. That's their condition they have they are backslidden that's how we see them like backslidden children.

[12:56] People who should know better people who have been enlightened by God people who God through the prophets had spoken to them again and again and again giving them direction giving them awareness of who they were and what they were needed and they saw it in their father's mind what had happened.

The witness of your father's here in this church over the generations. How different would it be?

How different do we despise them? Do we think we have something better today? No we don't.

No we don't. We need the old old story that is new every day every morning his meshes is new.

The glory of God had been revealed to them in days gone by and now they find themselves what are they doing? They are bowing to stones and to idols. That's what he says that they have changed their God he said. My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit he said.

But we don't have idols don't we? Do we have something that comes between us and God?

Do we have something that holds the light from our soul? Something we really care for something

we don't want to part with something because you see we don't want to part with certain things and

certain sins and things like that but it is a must that we are to be sanctified we are to be sanctified

by him and there is no short cuts in this. Our understanding becomes darker we walk in the dark and then we don't know where we're going. This is what he's saying to them there. They are saying to a stock that is to a idol or a bit of tree that is left in the ground there they are saying in chapter 2 there and in chapter verse 27 saying to a stock they're worth my father they're worth my father and to a stone and to a stone. This is what they were bound to now to the Queen of Heaven to the moon to the sun and that they thought that that was fine because they had been released from the bondage of Egypt but why were they released from the bondage of Egypt? Well it was so that there would be holiness unto the Lord. Israel was holiness unto the Lord but that didn't keep them from being shoved down to Babylon that didn't keep them because they didn't keep their side of the covenant.

God kept his side of the covenant and God always keeps his side of his work but here they didn't keep their side in the Lord. They went back to the old things they used to do that gave them joy and gave them a degree of strength but what he says here is in this backsliding is that it's a nautical term that he uses here. When the writer to the Hebrews he uses it there as well because he says that it is a slipping of the rope. It is a slipping of the rope through the bollards when there are not enough terms on the bollard or on the cleat.

[17:29] You've seen it happen probably yourself. When it is not made that is the word that he uses to make it fast. That's a nautical term and again and again he uses that word he says stand fast in the liberty that Christ has set you free. Stand fast hold on to it he says because I can see you're slipping and they were slipping and that eventually they didn't stop.

It wasn't you slide I slide our hearts are desperately wicked and we are prone to wander as the hymn writer said prone to wander Lord I know it prone to leave the God out of them but that is in the end because when this slips off and this can happen in the heart long before it's visible in the passion himself or on to his friends they can go slip away bit by bit bit by bit with little things left undone.

They don't drink in the rain he said as the Hebrews chapter 6 says to us the haze and the maze of sin around them dazzles them in such a way that it affects the love towards God the love to God. This is one of the things that was said about the the church in the book of Revelation he said you have left your first love you have forsaken your first love he said everything else was fine everything else was pretty everything else seemed to be no there was nothing wrong with it but the thing was the essence of the matter is that the love to God had walked cold got cold have you felt that yourself sometimes maybe on a mountain top experience you had your heart was warm and you wanted like the other one to stay there and make three tabernacles but then you see the the air the cool air came over it and you're left with this coldness in your heart and there is then a lack of desire to read the bible lack of desire to pray lack of a desire to accompany the others when they go to the prayer meeting you see it only it starts in little bits and a little bit becomes a big thing eventually that's how Satan works my friend if he could keep you from being here tonight that's exactly what he likes that's what he wants you to do if he can close your ears to everything that is said that's exactly what he is here for don't underestimate the power of evil because this is what happened to them and they are in less enlightened days than we are we are born into this world

Christ has been in this world Christ came as the light of the world into us here and now he says he says to us don't walk in darkness because the person who walks in darkness doesn't really know where he's going it doesn't matter what he thinks in his mind he doesn't matter what anybody says about him he doesn't know he said where is God but if we walk in the light he said we have fellowship with one another we can see one another we can mingle with one another we can strengthen one another and this is why they fell by the wayside they forsook the Lord because he said my fear is not in them my fear is not in these is in chapter 2 and verse 19 my fear that's what keeps us motivated that's what keeps us steady on the push is the fear of the Lord it is not a fear nothing an awful fear it's a loving fear it's a fear of forsaking him it's a fear of letting him down or letting anything else come into our life that will distract us away from the worship not at all the love he watched them wilting away bit by bit you know a lukewarmness he calls the church came lukewarmness and he said it I just don't want that he says I would rather it be cold or hot I would spew it out of my mouth and that's not just a few signs of what might happen in our life in our christian walk in this world where it is so important that we are the light of the world it doesn't matter what the television says it doesn't matter what somebody else says this is what

God says you are the light of the world and the salt of the earth but the salt loses its savor its test what did they used to do with it then while they used to take it outside and make paths where to be thrown under the feet of men just like gravel you put gravel on your path today because it had lost its savor it was no good for what it was made for it had become a useless thing but just for for road works or things like that but he goes further than that he says that they went and had developed the gods worship the gods of the heathen nations they even they even in worship can offered their children on the offering there on the mountain on the hill there to those gods see the power that that gets a hold of your mind to do things like that they offered their children there not just animals but their children following christ we say is harder i would say it's a lot harder to follow those false gods we made such demands upon their lives that they should give them their children on the altar see they tired themselves carrying those heavy gods up to the mountaintops and they forsook the god who was there to carry them along the way but when where do we go from here well the solution is found here he doesn't leave them and they dare say to them or doesn't matter now what happens now he says or he says return that's the word return it highlights the mercy of god and the grace of god and the love of god that passes all understanding all that you would test that tonight here and know the love of christ filling your heart you see they are his covenant children my friend that's why he's he's chasing after them that's why he's rounding them back again that's why he's casting them down there so that they get an understanding and their minds are clear and they're in a place again where they appreciate it who god is and they recognize who god is that's the essence of scripture as the essence of the bible who god is but it's when we discover who god is in christ jesus that is when we are set free but we are not set free to do anything we like ourselves we are not set free to do that we are set free to do his will we are his as peter says his peculiar people that's one of the words that he uses but you our understanding of peculiar people is a person who's strange or odd or something like that but that's not what he meant there is a peculiar people meant like the in their language the type of land say you have a bit of land and you want to fence it around it and say then well

[27 : 44] that's my land man and that's what peculiar here means the we doubt in the middle of that and they're surrounded by the mercy of god his eye is upon them at all times he watches them budding he watches them wilting and he catches them as the eagle sweeps under the the the birds she throws out of the nest to catch them and bring them back up again until they're strong enough to fly them on their own the the answer is says it's not in rituals it's not in ritual washings or anything like that he said he said in verse chapter 2 and verse 22 he says it's not he said well though it has washed thee with nether though you wash yourself with nether and much so yet the iniquity is marked before me say it the Lord that's why it can't be taken away because of your behavior how you acted after i had worked and done released you from that situation because god has to maintain this line right to the end he isn't going to lose them but he doesn't mean to say that we would be be chastened he doesn't mean to say that we would be corrected and the bible tells us that correction is grievous we don't like correction but sometimes we have to be corrected we have to to return to turn round my friend that's what he means i met the lawyer to turn to completely not just halfway round but totally round have your back to the things that you were facing before and to all the habits that you had before that is really important and i think we need to emphasize that in our present day and generation if a man be in christ he says or a woman be in crime he is a new creation he said so he cannot be taken up with these things oh yes in the world but not off the and that's the big difference i will find you he says he said there he will find you he says a pastor and i says and i end my time but you're not ready he says in a sense for it you have to go there and then come back again and then you'll have a different person might have experienced that yourself you have gone into a depth of despair or into a dark valley where you all thought that everything had gone no hope but he doesn't leave you there forever he doesn't leave you there any longer than he sees that you need to be there or i need to be there he brings him up again in his hands because he wants them to repent truly repent not not a repentance that's been or a christianity that is a mile wide and a foot deep that's not in the christianity that he's looking for here this isn't the godliness that we're looking for here to say remember he said i am married to you how does why we offend them when we sin against when we do things like that i am married he said

to you that's in verse 12 he said i am married to you he says and i am mercy for he said i am merciful and i will show mercy unto you and i will be gracious unto you verse 14 of chapter 3 toronto backsliding children says the lord for i am married to you and i will take you one of a city to our

family and i will bring you to sire to gergius and again back to your first love why well he said no man plucks them out on my father's hand he said see if we can't be plucked out of god's hands other hands we have never been in his hands that's the reason we have never been it's our hold on him whereas whereas what he speaks of here is his hold on us that's why we can't get out of it we can't get away from it i will heal your back sliding and sit and bring you and restore unto you the years that the law first happened many many years and a word at the end i know it's time our time is up but it's it's recording the blessings that followed the blessings that followed they said for the we come unto thee he said for why for thou art the lord of god you are the lord of god is not the idols that we slavishly worshiped there that we slavishly carried up to the mountains there to all their gods he said that we fell into their net he said but your god he said you are out god that's what god wants to hear from us through jesus christ tonight who do men say he says that i am they said well some say this some say that the talk of the town or something else but he said but who do you say that i am you are christ he said the son of the living god son of the living that's what he wanted to hear so that they they need not any longer be a dislocated member member and a dislocated part of this body that paul refers to those who were in christ who were falling out of christ he said that they were they were giving pain the stress spending pain through the whole body of the believers because why well they had to be located the joint has to be located again for the pain to cease and that is why the one sinner destroys much good and here we see that the difference is between the choice between remaining in that dislocated painful condition or say behold we come you are our lord our lord our god and that is what he wanted to hear from them and that's what he got and if god is striving with you and christ is thriving with you and spirit is thriving with you he will make you do it he will make you say it he you will have no say in

this matter at all because it's not your will that jesus said but he said my will be done he said your will be done he said why not and auguston said that we are free when we delight to do god's will we don't have to turn and act screaming and shouting to do something when we delight to do god's will what is all that about grace grace training and righteousness through jesus christ our lord seek me he said and live don't seek better don't seek gilgall don't go up to berkshiba seek me and live don't go to the other gods mothering that are not gods they are mouths they have ears they have all sorts of things but they can't help you in your time of trouble there is only one god who answers and that is our god the lord our god he says in another place i may finish with that i will allure her i said i will take her he says unto the wilderness as you would take anybody into the wilderness but that's where god takes his people he separates them into our wilderness he said where he can speak to them on a one-to-one basis i will speak comfortably to you he said i will give you he says he says vineyards and the valley of achar the valley of trouble i will open a door there for you opening a door in the midst of your trouble and your disillusionment and your pain in in in the absence in everything that is wrong only god can do it and god can't do it believe me he can't do it he still doesn't he still loves his people he still cares for his people he still corrects his people until he collects his people when there will be one again as he says there and they will call him my father she shall sing then as in the days when she came out of Egypt brings her all the way back to there reminding her of the joy that was in her heart that night when she was set free from reminding her of that again most sweet the soul said amazing grace i once he said was lost no i'm fine i was blind but now i see and he hears the cry of the destitute here too or in any place in carlo way or wherever it is he says he sick beckons us to come to him and find rest for our souls walk he says in the way see he says stand here the way and see and ask for the old park where is the good way he doesn't say where is the new way where is the new thing where is the old way he says and walk there in and you will find is that rest for your souls but we could leave it there without saying finishing the text off the text says that jesus promises them that god promises them that but what was their reply to her we will not that's what they said stand you say see ask for the old paths where is the good way walk there in and you will find rest for your soul a guaranteed rest that they said no sad isn't it you said no to the gospel no to jesus who to whom else can we go my dear friend but unto him who loved us and gave himself for us for jesus sake our man blessed be lord of efforts together and the pripy priest lord to touch souls here tonight the seed soul might come to life in juker when the dew of heaven touches it and maybe 20 years from now you know we know whether we saw in the morning or so in the evening or so at bedtime or you know not says god gives the increase or jesus says forgive us amen we conclude by singing one two five so i'm one two five day in the lord that firmly trust shall be like sion hill which at low time can't be removed but stand up ever still so i'm 125 day in the law that firmly trust shall be like sion hill which at no time can't be removed but ever still

and the land of Jerusalem.

Come on, and stand away. The Lord is full.

[42 : 59] Thou cometh the soul. From thanks for done for him.

For he who makes all the calm the low, of just men shall abide.

Let's watch as men stretch over their hearts unto iniquity.

Thou to all those lying there. Thy goodness for him for unto the good Jerusalem upright within their hearts.

But as for such a stern aside unto him who midway God shall lead forth with women are his rules we shall see.

[44 : 44] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest upon you and above you and round about you, and evermore. Amen.