

JEREMIAH 3

A CALL TO RETURN!

The foregoing chapter was taken up with reproofs and threatenings against the people of God because of their apostasies from Him; but in this chapter, gracious invitations and encouragements are given to them, in order to draw them to repent and return to Him – despite their great and numerous provocations, which are here specified. This serves to magnify the mercy of the Lord; and to show that just as sin abounded, grace did much more abound. The prophet begins by showing how bad they had been, and how well they truly deserved to be abandoned by God – and yet how ready He was to receive them back into His favor upon their repentance (verses 1-5). How gently the Lord corrects His children! Why would we refuse to take the benefit of the pardon that He freely proclaims? Backsliders may rejoice in the hope that they will certainly find in Him the tender compassions of a Father toward a returning prodigal! He may chasten for a time, but He will not keep His anger forever.

The prophet proceeds to show that Judah's impenitence and persisting in sin were even more inexcusable because they had seen God's judgments upon their sister-kingdom of Israel, which they should have taken warning by (verses 6-11). When we see the consequences of those who profess to be God's people, and yet live in willful rebellion against Him, then we shall see an abundance of reasons to shun evil ways!

Despite the charges that the Lord levelled against His people of Judah, He still gives them great encouragements to return to Him in repentance (verses 12-19). If we confess our sins, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive them! He will graciously receive those who return to Him, and He will teach them to call Him their Father! These charges of apostasy, and the invitation to return and repent, are reiterated in verses 20-25; and here the prophet also adds the words of humility and confession that ought to be in the mouths of repentant backsliders when they return to seek their God. Forgetfulness of the Lord is at the bottom of all sin; but God's promise to those who return is that He will heal their backslidings by His pardoning mercy, His quieting peace, and His renewing grace. However, in order to come to Him in true repentance, we must renounce all expectations of relief and succor from anyone or anything except Him! We must come to Him, depending only upon the great salvation from sin which Jesus Christ has worked out for us. As long as people harden themselves in sin, misery shall be their portion. The person who covers his sins shall not prosper, but the one who confesses and forsakes them shall find abundant mercy!

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The Lord exhorts His people to repent and return to Him – verses 1-5
- ❖ He shows them the inexcusableness of their sins – verses 6-11
- ❖ Pardon is still promised to them if they would only return to Him – verses 12-20
- ❖ Words of humility and repentance are put into their mouths – verses 21-25

Having gained a general overview of the contents of this chapter, let us take a moment to dwell upon some pleasant words in the 14th verse which are soothing for a troubled conscience! “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you!” Such singular comfort will certainly cheer up our souls! What amazing grace that He should be married to any of us! God speaks to His Church in her lowliest estate; and although He does not fail to rebuke her sin and make her lament it, yet He still says to her, “I am married unto you!”

Marriage is cemented by mutual love. Where this mutual affection does not exist, it does not deserve the name of marriage. Can we even begin to speak of the love of God? It is a theme that we are scarcely competent to talk of! But marriage also necessitates certain mutual relations. We cannot say “duties,” for the word seems out of place on either side. How can we speak of the great God making pledges of faithfulness to His Bride? And yet, when He becomes the Husband of our souls, He undertakes to do the husband’s part – namely, to nourish, to cherish, to shield, to protect, and to bless those with whom He enters into union. And now, what should our response be? The wife is to reverence her husband, and that is precisely our position toward Him Who has married us. Let His will be our will.

The marriage-relationship also involves mutual confidences. In a true marriage, the husband and wife become one. Henceforth, their joys and cares, their hopes and labors, and their sorrows and pleasures rise and blend together in one stream. And our God has said this concerning us! The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant. Now, then, dear believer, remember that you stand in the relationship of the Bride; therefore, you may tell out your very heart’s secrets and sorrows to Jesus!

How far do we experimentally understand these things? Dear Christian brother or sister, surely you know that God is married to you! And if you do, can you not say with me, “Yes, and He has been a very faithful Husband to me”? Well, then, speak well of Him! Make this world hear His praise!

If you do not yet know Christ, please answer this question in your own heart: do you desire to be married to Jesus? Do you wish to have Him? If so, then there will be no difficulties in the making of the match! If your heart goes after Him, He will have you! Whoever you may be, He will not refuse you. In fact, He seeks you; and when you seek Him, that is a sure sign that He has already found you! The wedding ring is ready, for Faith is the golden band which is the token of the loving marriage-relationship!

Lord, help us to never depart from our Savior, Who has lovingly and graciously condescended to join Himself in a marriage relationship with our sinful nature! Amen.

