

God begs His People to Come back to Him I

Jeremiah 3

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[0 : 0 0] Take your bibles if you would and turn with me to the book of Jeremiah. That's another form of discipleship that we have going on in our church when people are teaching these kids to sing and they're singing about Jesus.

I go to church with old people in them and everybody sings my age and older. I'll just praise the Lord for these young people. You know that God has a people in the Old Testament and it's the nation of Israel.

And like in the New Testament, Jesus has a people and it's the church. He's the head. We're his body. And what's going on in the Old Testament in Jeremiah's day is God's people.

Now this is an individual, but God's people as a nation, they're not honoring God. And in this passage of Scripture, chapters 3 and 4, he begs them to come back to him.

He begs them to come back to him. Read with me if you would, Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 25. Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 25. We lie down in our shame and our confusion covers us.

[1 : 0 7] Why are you lying down in shame? Why is confusion covering you? For we have sinned against the Lord our God. We have sinned against the Lord our God.

Can I just say that's a long devotional for you and your children and everybody. When we sin against the Lord our God, it will cause us to lie down in shame and confusion will cover us. Just look at that verse.

We and our fathers from our youth, even to this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God. What's it mean to sin against our God? We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.

I'll just tell you, in their day, the voice of God was through a prophet or a preacher. And a lot of Scripture wasn't written down today. But you hold in your hands the written voice of God.

I don't hear any voices. I don't hear or get new revelation. But I have the written voice, word of God. Jeremiah 4.1 They're in shame and they're doing wrong.

[2 : 1 4] But look how God talks to them. If you will return, O Israel, says the Lord, return unto me. And if you will put away your abominations, if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

Once you put them out of your sight, I'll keep you. I'll never let you go away. I'll take care of you. Father, I pray you would help us to love you and serve you as a church, as a people, as a group.

I pray you'd help this church to stay in love with you and on fire for you. And that the lessons that we're about to learn about the nation would not be about our church. And I pray, God, that as a church and a nation are both made up of people individually, help me to love you and to follow you and to serve you and to honor you and to stay close to you and to keep listening to you and to obey you.

And I'll give you praise for all you do. In Jesus' name, amen. Go back with me, if you would, to Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 1. Here's what we start in Jeremiah 3. In Jeremiah 3, he's saying, I don't care what you've done.

I don't care how far away you've gotten. I want you to come back to me. He's going to say in the verse I'm about to read to you, normal people would not allow you back. Normal people would not allow you back.

[3 : 35] And before I read that verse with you, I want you to look with me at Romans chapter 5 and verse 6. You do know that normal people wouldn't save you. You do know that normal people wouldn't love you.

You do know that normal people wouldn't. Not like Jesus has. Not to save you. Not to give their life. Look at what the Bible says, which is like a New Testament version of this Old Testament verse. He says, for when, Romans 5, 6.

When we were yet without strength. When we were without strength, right on time, Christ died. Who did he die for? The ungodly. Look, if you would, down at verse 7.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Hey, some people might die for a good guy. Yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die. But God committed his love toward us.

And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Go back and read with me. Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 1. The Bible said, They say, if a man put away his wife and she go from him and become another man, shall he return unto her again?

[4 : 36] Shall not the land be greatly polluted? Now stop right there just a second. Let me show you what he's saying. He said, in normal Israel, when your wife is unfaithful to you and marries another man and then breaks up with him, divorces him, you wouldn't take her back.

You wouldn't take a wife that left you, married another man, and came back. Read the verse to me. If a man put away his wife, I divorce my wife. She leaves me. She becomes another man's wife. Shall he return to her again?

But look at what he says at the last part of chapter 3, verse 1. But you played the harlot. You, thou hast played the harlot with many lovers.

You have been not another man's wife. You've been a prostitute in business. And he said, but look how sweet he is. Will you read the verse to me?

Yet, in spite of all that, no matter where you've been, no matter what you've done, yet, return again to me, says the Lord. If that doesn't touch you, I don't know what would touch you.

[5 : 42] The love relationship God has with his people is compared to a man loving his wife. And when God's people love other gods, they sin against him horribly. In God's opinion, if you worship another god, what you're doing is prostitution.

What you're doing is adultery. In James chapter 4, friendship. Look at it. Open your Bible to James chapter 4. And look at what the Bible says about it for us in the New Testament. James, I think it's going to be 4-4.

That's not in the notes back there. Guys, James chapter 4 and verse 4. The Bible says, God makes it clear, though.

I want you back. I don't care how far you've gotten away from me. I don't care how much sin you've been involved in. I don't care how many false gods you've been worshiping. Return again to me.

Look at chapter 3 and verse 12. Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, Return thou backsliding Israel. One of the favorite terms that Jeremiah is going to use is the word backsliding.

[6 : 55] And backsliding means you were up here loving and worshiping God, but you kept turning away and becoming faithless and moving your love from God, and you're putting your love in another place. It's apostasy.

It's turning from God to something false. And God says, Return backsliding Israel, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you. He said, You should return to me because I'm good.

I want you to look at the verse. He said, You guys should come back to me because I'm good. A normal man would just shoot her. A normal man would just say, It's over.

I'll never have anything else to do with you. But the God of glory says, Come back to me. Do you know my character? Look at the verse, if you would, with me. Chapter 3 and verse 12. I am. Say that word with me.

For I am. You ain't said it. Come on. Say it. I am merciful. I am merciful. I am merciful. Say the Lord. I will not stay mad. I will not stay mad.

[7 : 48] I will not keep anger forever. Look if you would at chapter 3 and verse 22. Return you backsliding children and I'll heal your backsliding. Y'all come on back and I'll heal you.

All I want you to do is acknowledge your iniquity. Chapter 3 and verse 13. Only acknowledge thine iniquity. Underline that. God said, I don't care where you've been.

I don't care what you've been doing. I don't care how far away you got from me. I want you to acknowledge your iniquity. I want you to admit you've done wrong. I want you to admit that you've gone away from me. I just want you to say you want me again.

What a great God of grace. I think everybody in this room ought to say, what a great God of grace. Anybody else? Do you remember with Moses? Moses and God had two different discussions.

And one time God said, I'm just going to kill them all. And Moses said, you can't do that. That goes against your character. God said, okay, you're right. Another time Moses said, I'd like you to kill them. And God said, I can't do that. You know I can't do that. It goes against my character.

[8 : 45] Huh? You ever read the book of Hosea? I mean, it's just in here. And I'm never going to get this message finished. I'm already, I'm running too many things in the Bible. I think about it. You know that in the book of Hosea, he told Hosea to marry a prostitute.

To marry a prostitute. Because he said, that's how my people treat me. I want to get that message across. But God is a God of grace. He said, y'all come back. Y'all come back. Now go with me if you would.

Chapter 3 and verse 2. And I just want you to realize, they have committed, in God's opinion, great and horrible sin. Look if you would, in chapter 3 and verse 2, the last part of the verse.

Thou has polluted the land with your whoredom and your wickedness. Now this whoredom here, we're not, illicit sex was a part of that worship.

But it's really not the sex that was the issue here. It was that you're not to love and worship another God. You're never to say, you're never to take the love you promised God and give it to another God.

[9 : 41] That's wicked. And they have polluted the land. Look at chapter 3 and verse 20. Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel.

You guys have been wicked. Underline in verse 20, treacherously. Underline in verse 20 twice, treacherously. What sin hurts more than unfaithfulness in marriage?

What intimacy is greater than marriage? And that's what he's comparing it to. They perverted or twisted God's ways. Look at Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 21. Just go down to the end there because I'm going to have to fly here.

Go down. They perverted their way. They perverted their way. They twisted their way. They got off track. They messed everything beautiful up. Worship is beautiful, but worship is only beautiful when it's worshiping the God of heaven.

Worship is not beautiful when it's worshiping on the Ganges River in India. That's not beautiful worship. That's sickening worship. They perverted their way. And look what they've done. They have forgotten the Lord their God.

[10 : 48] Jeremiah chapter 4 and verse 3. They have developed hard, crusty hearts. Listen to that. They developed hard, crusty hearts. So if you'll look with me in the Bible, Jeremiah chapter 4 and verse 3 says, Break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns.

And fallow ground is like ground that's never had a plow. It's basically virgin dirt. It's like this ground has never been plowed. This ground is not soft and tillable. This ground is hard ground.

So you're not going to get anything to grow there. And he's saying, why don't you all break that up? And so they're agricultural. They understand that. And how many of us have let our hearts get hard? How many of us have got our hearts where we don't accept new truth?

Where we don't accept what the Word of God says? Where we don't let God's Word in? We have hard hearts. And then we have gone into the world and accepted the world so much that they're a part of us.

Look at Jeremiah chapter 4 and verse 4. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord. Take away the foreskins of your heart. There's all these things in the Bible you read and be like, I don't like talking about that.

[11 : 52] But the whole point of circumcision was the people that are circumcised are God's people. And the people that aren't circumcised are lost people. And he said, you know what? You guys might have had a physical operation, but you're still acting like you belong to the other group that hadn't been circumcised.

Why are you acting like you belong to them? Circumcise your hearts. Circumcise your hearts and come back to the Lord. But you know when he's preaching to them, go with me to Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 3.

They have the most ridiculous attitudes that they throw back in the face of God. And if you've ever been a preacher and you've ever stood in front of people and talked to them, I have seen many of these attitudes when I preach.

Look at what it says in chapter 3 and verse 3. Therefore the showers have been withholding. God hadn't let it rain. And then they had an early rain and a latter rain. It rained in the spring and rained in the fall and God didn't let it rain.

And he said, and you know when I'm dealing with you, instead of being sorry for your sin, you have a whore's forehead. And you refuse to be ashamed. Okay, this is getting really bad.

[12 : 59] So this woman of the streets walks into the church and she is not the least bit embarrassed. She walks in here praying herself, showing off her body just like she tried to sell herself on the street.

And she is totally unembarrassed. God said, you know what bothers me about y'all? You have sinned. And when I say something to it, when I send my preachers to preach to you, you got a face like a prostitute. You just sit there and look at me and say, you can't embarrass me.

You can't make me feel bad. You can't make me want to get right with God. I'm not going to do it. Look at the attitudes they had. Go with me to Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 4. The only time they call on God is when they have to, and they really think, well, God's a good guy.

This, I think, is maybe one of those verses to help us understand. You know, when you preach grace, everybody kind of goes like, he's such a goody-goody two-shoes, such a nice guy, nobody would go to hell.

Sin wouldn't have any consequences. God wouldn't deal roughly with anybody. And look what he says, if you would, in Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 5. Will he reserve his anger forever? And will he keep it to the end?

[14 : 04] Behold, you have spoken and done evil things as you could. Their attitude is God's not going to be mad. God's not going to get upset. They flagrantly say, we know that God is right.

We know that God is big. But he's a good guy, and he'll get over it. I think maybe the most blatant I ever heard that was in Peru. I hadn't been there long, and I had been teaching the guys how great God was, and how God would forgive sin, and how God was a gracious God, and how you didn't have to do penance because God did your penance for you.

When Jesus died on a cross for you. And you know what? Some of the guys went out and got drunk and did some wicked stuff. And when I talked to them, I said, what in the world? You know what they said to me? He'll forgive us.

He'll forgive us. All we got to do is ask him. That's the whore's forehead. That's the bad attitude. They sinned everywhere they could.

Look at Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 6. Backsliding Israel had done. And I want you to underline, she has gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot.

[15 : 14] So she's doing her worship. She's doing her worship everywhere she can. And they're saying, we'll worship on that mountain now, worship under that tree next, worship on that mountain. We're going to flagrantly display our wickedness.

And then their sin always influences somebody else. You know one of the reasons that God has to be hard on us when we sin? Is because if I can flippantly get away with it, others will think they can.

Look in Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 7. So after she had done all these things, and I said, after she had done all these things, and I said, after she had done all these things, turn thou to me.

But she returned not. And guess what happened? Her sister Judah. Israel, Judah, two nations.

Judah's the one that was closer. Judah's the one where Jerusalem is. Judah's the place where David is or was. They saw it. And Judah does the same.

[16 : 19] Chapter 3 and verse 8. And I saw when all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, and I put her away, and I gave her a bill of divorcement. Yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not.

You see what happens? That's one of the reasons. You know, you need to understand in Hebrews chapter 12, God disciplines us when we do wrong.

Our young people should not leave here thinking we got this real nice cuddly Santa Claus that doesn't even have any coal or switches to give out. He is the God of heaven, not some dumb Santa Claus.

And we cannot flippantly play the harlot also. It gets to the point that sin seems insignificant. Look at chapter 3 and verse 9.

And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she had defiled the land, committed adultery with stones and stocks. I wish you'd underline the lightness of her whoredom.

[17 : 18] The flippantness of her whoredom. The, I can just sin and get away with it. I can worship a false god. And it doesn't really matter. This isn't that big a deal. Flippant.

And she's worshiping, committing spiritual adultery with rocks and tree trunks, stocks. And that's what she's doing. And she is defiling the land.

And then they have an invitation. And she fakes getting right. Look at Jeremiah chapter 3 and verse 10. And yet for all this, her treacherous sister Judah had not turned unto me with her whole heart.

But she faked it. She feigned it. She faked it. That word's like she hypocritical. She acted like she was doing it, but it wasn't real.

I would like you to just think back through what you've seen. Number one, you saw a great God that says, I love you and I'll take you back no matter what you've done. I will love you and I will take you back no matter what you've done.

[18 : 21] Come back to me, my people. And then God made sure to show us that they had really committed great sin. This wasn't some flippant little nothing. They had done terrible wrong. And when he dealt with them, they'd shown horrible attitudes.

They'd shown horrible attitudes. But God wants us to do right. God wants the nation of Israel. He wants Judah to do right. And so he says, if you'll do right, I won't cause my anger to fall on you.

Look at Jeremiah 3.12. Wow. I'm just so afraid you're not paying attention or listening and catching this. Israel's doing wrong with a flippant attitude and a hard stony face and a heart that won't listen.

And God is like, if you'll just come and do right, I'll love you. Verse 12. I will not cause my anger to fall on you because I'm merciful.

I will not keep my anger forever. Chapter 3, verse 14. God will bring his people home. He'll bring them back to Zion. Chapter 3, verse 15. He will give them good pastors, good shepherds.

[19 : 28] Look at verse 15. When the day comes and you're replacing me, and if I don't do this, I ought to be replaced. You need to look at this. I'll give you pastors according to my heart that will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Help me understand the things of God. So a day is coming when God is going to bring his people back. And eventually, this is now going to kind of bump into some prophecy that we'll get later on in Jeremiah.

But eventually, Jerusalem is coming back. Israel is coming back. And Judah is coming back. And God is going to set up a kingdom. And there's going to be a millennial kingdom. And all these great things are going to happen. Look at Jeremiah 3, 19. I said, I shall put thee among the children and give thee a pleasant land and a goodly heritage of the host of the nations.

Thou shalt call me my father and shall not turn away from me. Do you know the story of the nation of Israel? Do you know the story of the nation of Israel? They're on fire for God and they're backslidden.

They're on fire for God and they're backslidden. They're loving God one day and they're turning away from God another day. If you study the book of Judges, every time they have the right man in charge and telling them to serve God, they do serve God.

[20 : 32] That guy dies and they go crazy until God raises up another guy. God is good. But I need you to understand this.

Jeremiah chapter 4 and verse 6. He punishes. And there are consequences. I don't think we want to have a lightness towards our whoredoms.

I don't think we want to flippantly act like it doesn't matter if I'm in love with Jesus and for real. Chapter 4 verse 6. Set up the standard towards Zion. Retire. Stay not.

For I will bring evil from the north and a great destruction. Israel is coming and I'm going to whip your backside. Chapter 4 verse 8.

Lament and howl. For the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us. Lament and howl.

[21 : 33] The fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us. Chapter 4 verse 14. Jeremiah is broken hearted.

Because he knows how good God is. And he knows how wicked the people is. And he knows how God wants them to get right with him. And he knows how God wants to work in their lives. And so in Jeremiah chapter 4 verse 19.

Jeremiah says, my bowels. My bowels. We read that and we're like, that's crazy. Not really. Let the policeman pull up behind you while you're driving down the road doing something wrong.

And you'll feel it in your bowels. It's the center of emotion. It's the feelings. He says, I'm hurting in my heart. That's the way we'd say it today.

I am pained at my very heart. My heart's beating like crazy in me. And I can't calm down. My heart maketh a noise in me.

[22 : 42] I cannot hold my peace. Because you have heard. You have heard. You know war is coming. Chapter 4 verse 22. They're going to get hurt.

Because they were foolish children. Their attitude towards God is flippant. Their attitude towards sin is flippant. In Jeremiah 4 verse 22.

My people is foolish. They have not known me. They're like silly children. Sottish children. They have no understanding.

They are really wise to do evil. But to do good. They have no knowledge. And his heart's breaking. In verse 19. Because they're going to suffer the consequences.

Let me just tell you how bad it gets. Jeremiah chapter 4 verse 30. When thou art spoiled. That means when you're defeated.

[23 : 40] And they've taken all your stuff away from you. What will you do then? You can dress yourself in crimson. You can deck yourself with. You can put on all your jewelry. You can tear your face with painting.

You can show your sadness. You can try to look pretty. But you've been spoiled. You've been ruined. You've been robbed. And then he says this. It's a play on the thing.

The idea of adultery. Your lover will despise you. And they will seek your life. Let me just end this with.

Boy God is good. He is gracious and kind and merciful. And boy we are stupid. We're dumb enough. To rebel against a wonderful.

Generous. Merciful. Kind. God. We slowly. Drift into the world. Till we need circumcised in the heart again. We slowly. Let all the junk.

[24 : 39] Till our hearts get hard again. And the ground needs to be broken up. We slowly get to where we can. Have an attitude like. Preach all you want. And tell me what the Bible says. Fact is. I know what the Bible says.

You don't need to tell me. We get that attitude. Sometimes we think. He's a good God. So nothing bad will ever happen. If you're reading the book of Jeremiah.

You wouldn't think that. If you're reading the book of Jeremiah. You'd never come up with that idea. You'd come up with this. God will judge sin. And someday. That that you sinned will hate you.

That false religion. And all that junk. By the way. When they start calling out. For those stumps. And they start calling out. For those rocks to help them. They never do. They can't. And they won't.

Only God is real. So I'd like to have you tonight. Know this. We can't play with sin. We can't play with sin. You're playing with pornography.

[25 : 38] You're playing with an illicit relationship. With the opposite sex. You're playing with drugs or alcohol. You're playing with things. And you're getting right on the verge. And you're like. How close can I get to the world?

And how much can I live like a lost person? And you think it doesn't matter. Because God's a sweet God. Don't read Jeremiah. Because God does judge his people.

Don't read Hebrews. Because if you belong to him. He wants you on his line. Following his way. Or he will discipline. And also he will listen.