

God's Love and God's Way of Blessing.

~Other Speakers M-R: A.T. Robertson:

"Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed my voice, says the Lord." **Jeremiah 3:12,13**

Therefore, go and say these words to Israel, "This is what the Lord says: O Israel, my faithless people, come home to me again, for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever. Only acknowledge your guilt. Admit that you rebelled against the Lord your God and committed adultery against him by worshiping idols under every green tree. Confess that you refused to follow me. I, the Lord, have spoken!" **Jeremiah 3:12-13**

Let us mark here two things: (1.) God's message of love; (2.) His way of blessing.

I. GOD'S MESSAGE OF LOVE. He is evidently in earnest about this. There is nothing of coldness, or delay, or insincerity. He calls a messenger, a special messenger, for the occasion. He sends him out with, "Go," as did our Lord, "Go into all nations"; like an arrow from a bow. "Proclaim," speak, lift up your voice like a herald, that all may hear, and that there may be no mistake. "Toward the north," where "backsliding Israel" dwelt, and where her idolatries were practiced, as Bethel and Samaria; it is like, "Begin at Jerusalem"; go to the worst, to the very center of the sin and the evil; go to Bethel, go to Samaria, go to the chief of sinners; go to the backslider, the apostate, the idolater.

And go and proclaim what message? The message of love and reconciliation! The chief point of the message is the word "return." Like the prodigal they had departed; and the Father's voice calls to them, "Come back," come back to me. God speaks as one in earnest; as a father; as a father who has lost a child, and yearns over his lost son. "How shall I give you up" is his feeling; how can I part with you.

God is not indifferent to our departure or our absence. Though he has all heaven, with all its angels, he feels the blank made by one sinner's departure. The sea feels not the abstraction of a drop, nor the sun of a ray; the monarch of a mighty empire does not feel the departure of one subject, but God feels and mourns over the revolt and alienation of one sinner.

While urging home this word, "Return," God enforces it with encouragements and arguments.

(1.) I will not cause my anger to fall upon you. This is more exactly, "I will not cause my countenance to fall on you"; that is, I will not frown upon you; the words are the same as in describing Cain: "his countenance fell." Instead of the frown shall come the smile upon my countenance: "I will lift up my countenance upon you." This is grace and tender love. The sinner is thus told what he is to expect from God in returning. "When he was yet a great way off, the father saw him..."

(2.) I will be merciful. With Jehovah there is mercy; for his name is the Lord God, merciful and gracious. Israel had tested his mercy to the uttermost, but it was not exhausted. Its fullness was undiminished. Where sin had abounded, grace had much more abounded; and the announcement here of his mercy is to tell Israel that all their backslidings, and apostasies, and idolatries had not altered or lessened that mercy. It was mercy to the uttermost, mercy to the ultimate.

(3.) I will not keep anger forever. Indirectly this tells the terrible truth that there had been, and was still, anger against them. In wrath he had smitten them and scattered them. It had lain heavy and sore upon them. But it was not to be perpetual anger. "His anger is but a moment"; it passes away, and he teaches Israel to sing, "Though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away." Such is God's message of love; sent in truth and earnestness to Israel; sent with no less truth and earnestness to us! Return and be forgiven! Return and be blest! Return and let me pour out on you the fullness of my forgiving love!

II. THE WAY OF BLESSING. There is but one way to this; not merit, or goodness, or labor, or earnestness, but simply acknowledgment of sin. In this acknowledgment there is nothing meritorious, nothing in itself fitted to attract or secure blessing. But it is the way of God's appointment; it is the channel through which the forgiveness flows; it places us on that footing in which alone God can bless the sinner. So long as there is on the part of the sinner the slightest thought that he deserves to be blessed, that God ought to bless him, that he has done or felt anything which makes him more fit or qualified for blessing, he is not in a position in which God can be glorified in blessing him; no, he is retaining that self-righteous position which renders it impossible

that God can honorably and righteously bless him.

But the moment that he forgoes all claims, and takes the sinner's place before God, as one deserving nothing, that moment he is in the position in which God can and will bless. "Only acknowledge"! These are his words to us, announcing the way of blessing. "Only acknowledge"! Thus he speaks to us still (1 John 1:9).

The particulars of the acknowledgment follow:

- (1.) iniquity;
- (2.) transgression against the Lord our God;
- (3.) going after idols;
- (4.) not obeying the voice of Jehovah.

Just the sins in particular that Israel had committed. It is this particular enumeration of sin that he asks of us. Go into particulars when you come before the Lord. Beware of general confessions. They do not touch the conscience, and they do not reach God. Be very special and minute in all that you tell God concerning your sins. Yet with the full confidence of receiving pardon; for if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Only acknowledge! This is the one thing that God asks; it is the one thing that the sinner shrinks from. For it brings him down so far. It strips him absolutely of all goodness. Yet on no other footing will God deal with any sinner.

So was it in the case of the Pharisee and the publican. This was Laodicea's special sin; refusal to acknowledge poverty. It was to this that the Lord urged her. So he urges us. It is our pride that stands between us and blessing. Take the sinner's place and all is ours. Let us deal with him now as sinners; and when he comes again he will own us as sons and heirs.