

# Return ye backsliding children

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**Bible Text:** Jeremiah 3:22

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I would like us to turn in the Word of God, please to the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah chapter three verse 22.

“Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.”<sup>1</sup>

I trust that the Lord will write this Word indelibly upon the tables of all of our hearts.

Someone has likened life to a journey. It has a starting point and it has a finishing point. It begins with birth and it ends with death. Now the Christian life is also a journey. Well, really, it is a pilgrimage. And it, too, has a starting point and a finishing point. It begins with a new birth and it concludes with the believer's translation to glory.

But sadly along the way between point A and point B there is sometimes a tendency to digress from the appointed path. Sometimes in the words of Bunyan in *Pilgrim's Progress* we fall into the slough of despond or we turn aside into bypath meadow. These are never good times in our Christian experience. These are difficult times.

But this can happen to anyone and, indeed, has happened too many of God's people over the years, even to the most spiritual of individuals.

I was reading recently in the life of missionary C. T. Studd, one of the famous 'Cambridge Seven' who for six years had been a backslider. The reason for his falling away is given in his own words. He said, “Instead of going and telling others of the love of Christ, I was selfish and kept the knowledge to myself. The result was that gradually my love began to grow cold and the love of the world began to come in. I spent six years in this unhappy backslidden state.”

This is a very searching testimony of a man who lost out with God. But, thankfully, he did eventually go on to do great things for God as a missionary. But there was a period in his life when he turned aside into bypath meadow. And maybe there is someone here in the house of God this day and you have come to that place in your life. You have fallen

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 3:22.

into the slough of great despond or you have turned aside into bypath meadow. If that is the case, then the Lord has directed me to this portion to bring to you a message, to show you that all is not lost, to show you that there is mercy with the Lord.

May we ever have the attitude of the apostle Paul, the attitude he displayed in Philippians chapter three, for example. I would ask you to turn to Philippians chapter three just for a moment and I want you to notice please verses 13 and 14 that clearly shows or demonstrates the attitude adopted by the apostle. Look at it carefully.

He says:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Now I see three things in these two verses. First of all there is the perception in Paul's life. He said, "I count not myself to have apprehended."<sup>3</sup>

That indicates to me that Paul was not really satisfied with his spiritual life at that particular time. He desired more. And then there is the priority in Paul's life.

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."<sup>4</sup>

There was a forgetting of the things of the past and there was a looking to the future. And then there was the progress in Paul's life.

Look at it in verse 14. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."<sup>5</sup>

He wanted to go on with God. He wanted to advance in his spiritual life. I want to ask you the question just now. Do you want to go on with God? Do you want to advance in your spiritual life? Are you happy with your Christian life at this point of time or do you desire more? Do you long for more closeness with Christ, more fellowship with him, more times when He draws graciously near, more times when the Word of God is coming to you with power and freshness, more times of blessed communion and prayer?

Are you happy with your life? Are you happy with where you are spiritually? Or do you have a longing for greater things?

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<sup>2</sup> Philippians 3:13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 3:13.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Philippians 3:14.

Maybe there is someone here just like C. T. Studd so long ago. You have lost out with God. And the truth of the matter is you are backslidden. You have lost ground. You have lost your way. Your heart has grown cold!

Well, the invitation before us this morning is very encouraging. The Lord is saying, “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.”<sup>6</sup>

I want to have a look at this text. I see three things, three very simple, relevant things to each and every one gathered here in the house of God.

First of all, there is the divine assessment of the people in this verse. Look at what it says.

“Return, ye backsliding children.”<sup>7</sup>

This is God’s assessment of his people. He calls them backsliding children. These are not Jeremiah’s words. Jeremiah is merely the messenger. He is the mouthpiece of God. The Lord put this message upon his heart. He commanded His servant to deliver it and Jeremiah was faithful to the people when he delivered the truth that God had revealed unto him.

Now the word translated “backsliding” simply means ‘to turn back.’ It is first used in the Word of God in Genesis chapter three verse 19 where we read these words. “...till thou return,” there is the word, “...till thou return unto the ground.”<sup>8</sup>

That was God’s Word to Adam and the Lord was indicating that there would be a time when he would go back (return) to the dust of the ground from whence he had been taken. So there is the thought of going back.

It is also found in Genesis chapter 50 verse 14 where it says, “Joseph returned into Egypt.”<sup>9</sup> He went back to Egypt after the burial of his father Jacob in the Land of Promise.

It is also used in Joshua chapter two verse 23. “So the two men returned.” The reference here is to the two spies who had been sent out by Joshua to view the land of Canaan. The Word of God says that these two men returned. In other words, they went back to their camp. They went back to the place where they had been sent from. The word means ‘to slide back, to fall.’ It also means ‘to turn away, especially to abandon gradually the faith and practice of a religion that has been professed.’

It is found six times in the third chapter, verses 6, 8, 11, 12, 14 and 22.

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<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 3:22.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 3:19.

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 50:14.

Now this sin of Israel, the sin of backsliding had often been repeated. The book of Judges, for example, records at least seven occasions when the people turned away and on these times it pleased the Lord to discipline His people. He raised up an enemy or a nation to teach them a lesson. And then when He had taught them a lesson in repentance and in faith, they called out to Him again for mercy and then it pleased the Lord to raise up a deliverer in the form of the judges to liberate and to set His people free. And that is always the same. When we get away from the Lord then it pleases Him for our good, for His purposes to raise up something or someone or a crisis in our lives to humble us, to take away our pride, to cause us, again, to look to Him for mercy and grace.

And when we do that, when we cry out for mercy, thank God, the Lord always comes to our aid. And the One that He always sends is His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Savior or Deliverer of His people to liberate, to restore, to bring us back into fellowship and communion with Himself by His matchless grace.

So make no mistake about it. When we get our eyes on the Lord, God has a purpose and God's purpose is to bring us back to Himself and the tool that He uses to do that is His chastening rod.

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”<sup>10</sup>

James Smith once wrote that backsliding is not a crisis. It is a process, a gradual sliding down the hill of holiness unto the Lord into the low valley of the old self life.

Now let me illustrate this. In Genesis chapter 12 verse seven we read that Abraham journeyed and that reminds us of what I said at the very start in my introductory remarks, that life is a journey. But it goes on to say, “Going on still toward the south.”<sup>11</sup>

What does that indicate? That Abraham was overstepping the boundary. And that reminds us of the two pilots recently who overshot their destination point by 150 miles. They were obviously distracted by something. And because they were distracted they overshot their destination by 150 miles.

So obviously something had distracted Abraham.

And then we read in verse 10 that Abraham ‘went down.’ In other words, he went down into the land of Egypt. And then it says in verse 11, “And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt.”<sup>12</sup>

And finally we are told that Abraham was come into Egypt in verse 14. It was a process. It happened gradually.

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<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 12:6.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 12:9.

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 12:11.

I don't believe for one moment that Abraham intended this to happen, but it did.

Charles Simeon said, "However advanced a man may be in piety or age, he is still in danger of falling."

The same thing could be said of Lot in the book of Genesis chapter 13. First of all he looked towards Sodom. We are told that he lifted up his eyes and beheld the Jordan Valley that it was well watered before the Lord.

So he looked towards Sodom and then he longed after Sodom. What he saw enticed him. And then the Word of God tells us that he located near Sodom. He pitched his tent towards Sodom and then he lived in Sodom. And the story concludes in Genesis chapter 19 where we read of how he lost out in Sodom.

He never really intended these things to happen. He had so much potential. He was blessed in that he had a godly man for an uncle, a man who loved him dearly, who had an altar, who had a place for prayer and communion. But even Abraham who had those things grew cold at times.

For example, during the time that he was in Egypt he had to altar, no place of communion no meeting place with God. Even the best of men fail!

But the tragic thing about Lot is he never did have an altar, and yet the Word of God tells us very clearly that he was a righteous man. He was a just man. But we can see in his life and in experience how he got his eyes on things that he should not have gotten his eyes upon, how he digressed, how he went into bypath meadow. He lost out with God!

Someone once said, "No one is as empty as the man who has stopped walking with God and doesn't know it."

I think those words are very applicable to Lot. Maybe those words are applicable to someone here this morning.

A similar comment was made by another writer who said, "Life's greatest tragedy is to lose God or God's conscious presence and not miss Him."

Have you lost the conscious presence of the Lord with you? You may at this point of time not even be aware of it.

This reminds me of the story of Joseph and Mary when they were returning from Jerusalem after attending the feast. It says that they went a day's journey but the Lord was not in their midst. They never missed him for a whole day. Can you imagine that? Not missing your child for a whole day. They supposed him to be in the company.

And I suppose we could say that they were careless. And sometimes that is the way it is

with us. We become careless with regards to spiritual things, with regards to our devotional life and our prayer life and other things creep in and take the place of these all important spiritual matters. It happens to us all.

And we know the story of how they, Joseph and Mary, had to spend the next three days searching for Christ. And that must have been a trial.

Declension usually begins in unwatchfulness. It usually begins with neglect of fellowship with God.

It was J. C. Ryle, the great bishop of Liverpool who once said, "Backsliding generally first begins with neglect of private prayer."

Have you been neglecting private prayer? Have you been neglecting daily devotions, or daily witnessing for Christ? That was the reason C. T. Studd gave for his backsliding. He had the message. He enjoyed hearing the message, but he failed to share it.

Are you failing to share the good news of the gospel with your family and friends? Are you failing to tell others of the grace of God? It is a great message. It is a sin to withhold that message from men and women who desperately need to hear that good news.

Elijah was fearless on the mount with God, but he was faithless in the valley under the juniper tree. He thought that there was no one else doing what he was doing. He thought that he was the only one who was standing for God. And sometimes there is a tendency to think that we are the only people standing for God. That no one out there is taking the same stand that we are taking. The Lord reminded him and it was needful to be reminded of this truth. The Lord says, "I have 7000 in Israel that have not bowed the knee to Baal."

You are not alone.

And sometimes maybe that is the way it is with us. We feel that we are alone. No one cares for us. No one is interested. But be reminded of this. Jesus cares! And while it is good to have and enjoy human companionship—and I believe, that is the will of God. When God created Adam he didn't leave him alone in the garden. He gave him a help meet. He gave him a woman for companionship. It is the will of God for people to enjoy companionship. And it is good to have human companionship.

But let me remind you. The fellowship we enjoy with Christ is far superior to the communion we have with men or women. Even those closest to us cannot compare with the fellowship we enjoy with God when we bow on bended knee in His divine presence and unburden our hearts before Him to tell Him all the cares and worries we have.

There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus,  
No not one, no not one.  
Jesus knows all about our struggles.  
He will guide till the day is done.

There is not a friend like the lowly Jesus,  
No not one, no not one.

Elijah was tired. He was weary with the conflict. He was weary fighting the enemies of the people of God. He had put them to flight. He had done a great job. But he was weary. And so when he sat down under the juniper tree, tired and weary the Devil began to work on his mind. He began to feel sorry for himself.

Why is this happening to me, he thought?

Jezebel had said, "If I get the hold of you, I will take your head off."

Why is this happening to me?

Well, he had taken off the heads of quite a number of the false prophets and do you think that the Devil was going to let him off lightly? Not on your life. And those who seek to advance the kingdom of God must expect to deal with the same kind of opposition.

And so here he is sitting under the juniper tree feeling sorry for himself. And he wishes that he would die and prays to that end!

But Elijah is one of two men who never actually did die. He never did get that prayer answered.

And sometimes there are prayers that God doesn't answer, as in the case of Elijah, because God had something more for him to do and God was going to take him home to heaven in a most amazing fashion. Elijah, for a brief moment, lost his way.

Have you lost out with God? Are you cold at heart? Have you lost your way? Are you feeling sorry for yourself? Are you feeling lonely, you feel that no one understands you, that no one cares?

Well Jesus cares and He says cast all your care upon Him for he careth for you. He loves you and that is the message that comes to the surface here as we read the words before us.

"Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."<sup>13</sup>

Now the word "backslide" is not actually used in the New Testament, but the experience is and it is described in other ways. For example, it is described as leaving your first love. The Spirit of God moved John to challenge the Church at Ephesus about this very thing in the book of Revelation. The Church at Ephesus had been a spiritual church. It had been a great church. But, sadly, the Holy Spirit put His finger upon the sin of that church. They had left their first love. In other words, they had grown cold.

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<sup>13</sup> Jeremiah 3:22.

And then another experience that is used for backsliding is loving this world. And that was what was said of Demas who departed from the company of the apostle Paul having loved this present evil world. In other words, he backslid. He got away from God.

It was Charles Allen who said, “One difference between a sheep and a hog is that when a sheep falls into a mud hole it is uncomfortable and struggles to get out. When a hog falls into a mud hole, he wallows in it and enjoys it.”

That is the difference between a child of God represented in the sheep and one who may profess the Savior’s name, but has no substance or no evidence of grace, a mere professor of religion. They know nothing of the new birth. They know nothing of faith in Christ, or of union with Him. They may have the language, but they certainly don’t have the life. And when the child of God falls into sin, that believer will not feel comfortable in that wayward condition, but will struggle and resolve under God to get right with him.

But those who merely profess and ‘backslide’, can wallow in their sin and enjoy it because they have never been born of God.

So here in this word before us we have a divine assessment of the people. God calls them backsliding children.

But then in the second place there is the direct appeal to the people. The Spirit of God says, “Return, ye backsliding children.”<sup>14</sup>

They were backslidden, but yet He still calls them children. He is still their gracious Father whose house is still open for them, whose arms are still extended to them. His message to the nation through Jeremiah was, “Come unto me and I will heal you.”

Is that what you need today, spiritual healing, that bathing in the atoning blood of Christ, that stirring within again, getting back to walk in the old paths of righteousness? Is that what you need today?

There are three main considerations with which the Lord reinforces His appeal to the heart of His unfaithful children in these opening chapters.

First of all in verse 14 look at what it says.

He says, “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you.”<sup>15</sup>

This is a reminder of their covenant relationship to Him. It proclaims the dignity of their standing as the people of God. This was an indissoluble union that they enjoyed with their God, with Jehovah, with their Maker. It was also aimed at awakening within their souls the tender memories of the love of their espousals. Yes, they had been guilty of gross infidelity, but He remained faithful to His covenant bond.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah 3:14.



Now that is always true. The fault always lies with man. It lies with us. It never lies with God. He never breaks His covenant. He is Jehovah. He is the covenant keeping God. That is what that simply means. The fault always lies with us.

And so He stands before His people with outstretched hands, with words that manifest an unchanging love. You have left your first love, but My love remains the same. It is an unchanging love. And there is never a time when God does not love His people, because He is faithful. In this union, in this relationship, we are the ones who always falter. We are the ones who always fail, but God is unchanging. God's love never fails towards us. This is a form of appeal that is still addressed to a backsliding Christians today.

And to him also the figure of the marriage bond represent a great reality. When we trust Christ there is formed between Him and us a spiritual union which death can ever sever. We can say, "I am his and He is mine forever."

"They, too," says Paul, "Shall be one flesh. "This," he adds, "is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."<sup>16</sup>

There is an indissoluble union. We have been chosen in the eternal counsels, given to Christ in the covenant of redemption. As mediator of the covenant of redemption He assumes all of the responsibilities for His people. He becomes a man for them. He lives among men as the Godman. He goes to the cross. He suffers under the wrath of God and under the curse of the broken law. And he has effected through His atoning death a perfect righteousness for His people. And that is a righteousness that He clothes His people in. It is an imputed righteousness and fits us for heaven and for glory.

It is a blessed union and that union can never be severed. Praise the name of the Lord.

And Christ betroths His bride to Himself in faithfulness. And as He takes her by the hand he declares that well known promise found in the book of Hebrews chapter 13, "I will never, never let go your hand. I will never, never, never forsake thee.

That is really what He has committed Himself to do. Even if we believe not, that is, if the exercise of our faith should temporarily be suspended He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself.

That simply means that God cannot go back on His Word without dishonoring His own name. When God gives His Word, He honors His Word. And that Word is forever settled in heaven. God never goes back on a promise.

And the promises God has given in the Holy Scriptures He will honor. We have an unchanging God, an unfailing God, a God of mercy, a God of great compassion, a God who loves us for the sake of His Son. His love is an undying flame. The covenant of His peace will never be removed from the soul that once has been brought into that bond.

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<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 5:32.

And so He calls His backsliding people to return to Him for, He says, I am married unto you. I am a covenant keeping God.

And then the second plea has reference to the mercy of His divine character.

Return, He says, for I am merciful, verse 12.

“Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD.”<sup>17</sup>

This is an affirmation designed to meet the consciousness of the guilt which springs up within the penitent soul. When the call of repentance makes itself felt in the slumbering conscience there is an awakening to the fact that it is, indeed, an evil thing to forget God, to forsake God. That is the way the Spirit of God works when He begins to convict. It follows that a sense of fear, in some degree, follows upon the conviction of sin.

And the thought that comes to mind is will God cast off forever the soul that has so shamefully dishonored Him? Will he receive the wanderer in the far country when he sets his face again towards the father’s house? Will He in wrath, which guilt deserves, remember mercy? Will God really forgive me? Will God really have mercy upon me yet another time? I have been here so many times in the past. I wander so frequently from the paths of truth. Will He be gracious to me? Will he be merciful to me?

These are some of the questions that come to mind. Well, be assured today that we have the promise of God that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Why? Because he says, “I am merciful.”

The mercy of God is the supreme attribute of His character, especially to His disloyal people. His readiness to pardon constrained Micah to proclaim, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.”<sup>18</sup>

God therefore offers the penitent abundant pardon.

Let’s stop playing around. Let’s leave aside our airs and our graces. Let’s be real in the presence of God today because God sees you as you are. God sees me as I am. God knows my heart and He knows your heart. We cannot afford to try to deceive Him because it will not work. God have mercy upon us. We need to take the sinner’s place. We need to say to the Lord we have sinned. We have transgressed Thy holy law. We have grown cold in heart. We are backsliders before Thee. We are playing the part of the hypocrite. We are empty. Our lives are going nowhere spiritually. We have no power. We have no authority. We have no burden. We have no vision. We have no concern. We are playing church. We need God to bring us back to that place of first love. We need to and want to know again the blessing of God.

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<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 3:12.

<sup>18</sup> Micah 7:18.

And He says, "I am merciful."

And then the third consideration has a spiritual promise of renewal. He says, "Return ye... and I will heal your backslidings."<sup>19</sup> Verse 22.

And here, beyond question, the grace of God reaches its highest manifestation. There is, perhaps, nothing more precious to the wanderer, who in coming to himself, realizes that there is the promise of healing. It is the promise of forgiveness. It is the promise of the restoration of health. But it is more than that. It means the curing of the disease and the renewal of the life. It means that the lost energy is recovered, the first love is revived. The voice of rejoicing is heard anew within the soul. The joy bells begin to ring within. The inclinations are directed again towards things that are holy and lovely and good and pure and the erring feet are established again once more in the paths of righteousness.

He says, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."<sup>20</sup>

Finally, there is the definite answer of the people.

Look at what it says.

"Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God."<sup>21</sup>

The answer of Israel to the divine appeal has every appearance of genuine repentance.

"Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God."<sup>22</sup>

And following that resolve there are words which speak of sorrow, of sin and conscious shame.

Ted Randall calls this a prayer of repentance, that is, the words that follow the statement in verse 22. Sadly, however, their penitence was only superficial. It was very short lived. It did not issue in a renewal of a consecrated life. It was only some kind of temporary, emotional change. But in themselves, however, the words describe the experience of a sincere repentance. And regarded in that light they are profitable for our consideration.

This is true godly sorrow, true godly sorrow that the apostle Paul highlights and deals with in 2 Corinthians seven verses nine through 11.

"Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jeremiah 3:22.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

I think again of the prodigal. I think of the words he uttered in Luke 15. When he came to himself he said, "I will arise and go to my father."<sup>24</sup>

He actually did arise and he did go to his father's house. There was no short cut back home. Remember, he was in a far country and therefore it necessitated a long journey to get back home to where he needed to be.

The Greek word translated "repentance" in the New Testament means 'a change of mind.' That is what repentance is. We can certainly detect changes in the prodigal's life. For example, there was a change of attitude. His going away request was, "Give me." He was proud and rebellious. His homecoming request was, "Make me." He was very humble and submissive. There was a change of attitude. This is repentance.

There was a change of appearance. He was given a new wardrobe. His old clothes were removed and he was given a new suit of clothing which reflected a new standing.

Then there was a change in his activities, that is, from feeding the swine to enjoying communion with his father. There was a change in appetite. Prior to this he had been feeding on the husks fed to the swine, things that could never satisfy. And now he was feeding upon the fatted calf, the very best that his father could provide for him, something really nourishing and satisfying.

One preacher described the returning son as being restored, robed, ringed and reshod. Think about it for a moment. His misery is replaced with merriment. He is welcomed again in the father's house. He begins to serve the father again. He is restored to that place of fellowship once more in the father's home.

Now if you want to get back to God it is not going to be easy. In a sense, it is not just going to happen over night. Yes, once we come back to Him in faith and repentance, in His great mercy He forgives us, but the journey back home to that place we once were may take a long time. It may be difficult and arduous, but it will be worthwhile.

I think of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, David's friend. Remember the man who, when he was a child, was dropped by his nurse and as a result was wounded in both feet. When his father and grandfather died he thought that David would take vengeance upon him, so he fled to a place called Lodebar, the place of no pasture. And when David made enquiries about Jonathan's family he discovered that there was this young man, his friend Jonathan's son, was dwelling in Lodebar.

What did David do? Well, David whose name means the beloved & who in this is a picture of Christ, sent out his servants to bring Mephibosheth from the far country, the place of no pasture, to bring him in to his royal house. When he did come David graciously received him and gave him a place at his table.

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<sup>24</sup> Luke 15:18.

And, by the way, when he sat at the table, his wounded feet were covered. And that is what the Lord does for His people. When we come to Him and enter into that place of fellowship with him, He covers all our blemishes. He covers all our unrighteousnesses and praise God He fits us to sit down to dine at His table, to enjoy fellowship and communion with him. Here we have the definite answer of the people.

“Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.”<sup>25</sup>

So here is a word in season to you. It is a word in season to me. And, by the way, Jeremiah is preeminently the prophet of the heart for he uses that word “heart” over 60 times in his book. This was an appeal to the heart. And Judah needed to seek the Lord with all of the heart. And that is the way we need to seek the Lord.

He says, “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings [plural]. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.”<sup>26</sup>

“Behold, we come unto thee.”<sup>27</sup> Make that the prayer of your heart today.

“We come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.”<sup>28</sup>

May God’s Word be a blessing to us, a challenge to us for Christ’s sake.

Let’s pray.

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<sup>25</sup> Jeremiah 3:22.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.