

Repentance

Jeremiah 3

Repentance Introduction

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- The book of Jeremiah is full of messages calling God's people back into fellowship with himself.
- Sadly, during Jeremiah's lifetime, the people refused to repent.

Repentance Introduction

- This calling to repentance – returning to God, however, is continuous throughout the Bible.
- Jesus engaged in a similar ministry.

Repentance Introduction

Matthew 9:10-13 (ESV) ¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Repentance Introduction

- Today's passage reminds us that God calls those who have strayed back to himself.
- He desires fellowship with them – much as Jesus desired fellowship with those who saw their need.

Repentance Introduction

- I. Faithlessness 3:6-10
- II. Mercy 3:11-14
- III. Restoration 3:15-18
- IV. Return 3:19-25

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10

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- God compares his covenant with Israel to a marriage.
- Thus, their faithlessness is similar to adultery.

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10

- Since the nation had split in two, Israel and Judah were now like two adulterous sisters.
- Israel's exile was now similar to a divorce.

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10

- Under King Josiah, Judah experienced a brief revival.
- Sadly, the revival was superficial.
- They restarted activities in the temple in Jerusalem, but it was a strictly formal or outward religion.

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10



Like the inhabitants of Judah, we often fail, both as individuals and as states, to learn from the experiences of others. We always think that things will be different for us.

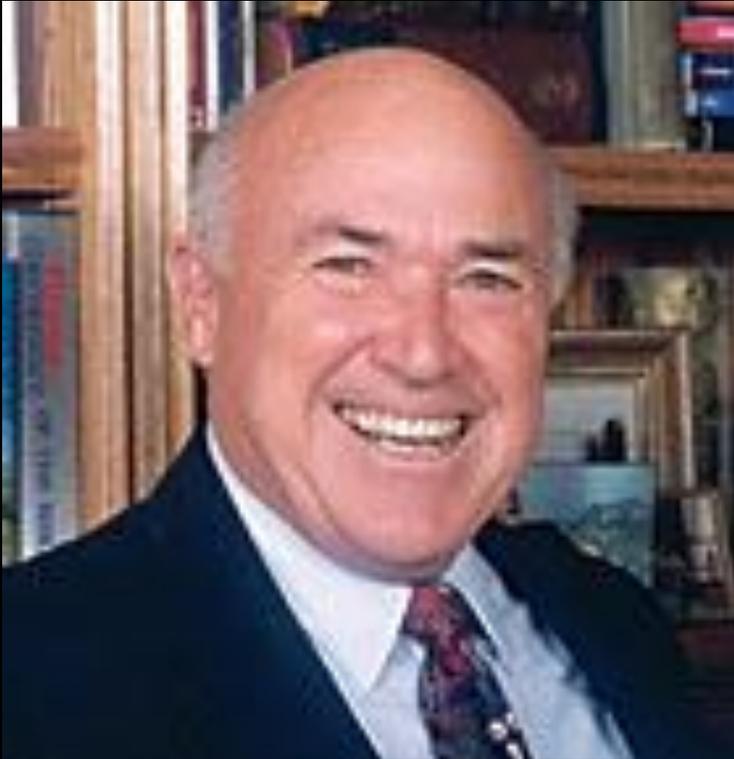
– Issiaka Coulibaly, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, FATEAC, Ivory Coast

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10

- After explaining Israel's wilderness wanderings as the result of the nation's sin, Paul tells us,

1 Corinthians 10:6 (ESV) Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

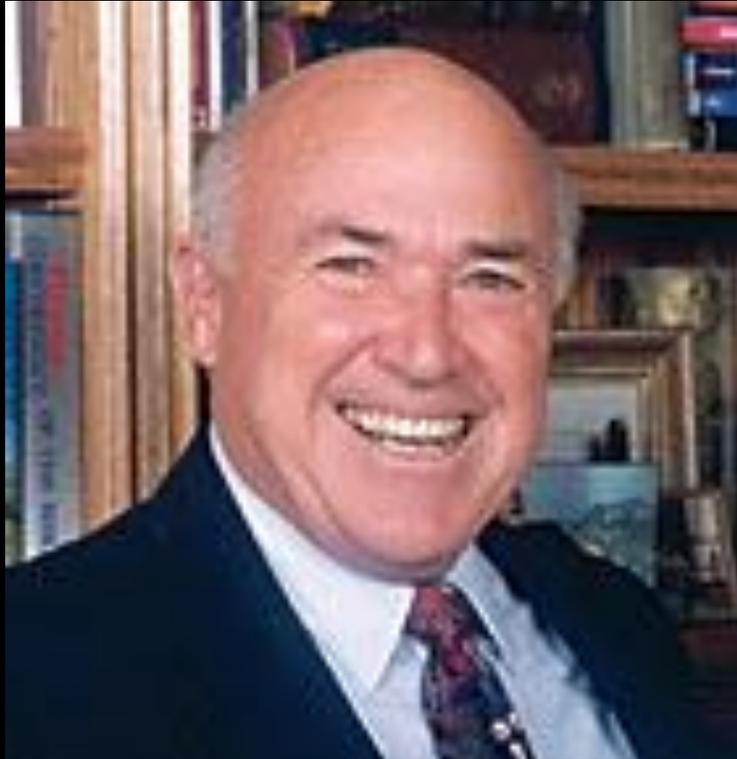
I. Faithlessness 3:6-10



From the surface, it appeared there was a real movement toward God. But God, who looks at the heart, said the people had not returned to Him with their whole heart. Half of their heart was still in the world and in the things of the flesh.

– Chuck Smith (1927 – 2013)

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10



They would give God the Sabbath and holy days, but the rest of the week they were pursuing their flesh. So God noted that Judah had not returned to Him with her whole heart, but had returned in pretense.

– Chuck Smith (1927 – 2013)

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10

- Judah could not maintain their half-hearted devotion for very long.
- It soon became outright rejection of God.
- They eventually experienced the same kind of destruction and exile that Israel did.

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10

- This can happen to Christians and to churches just as easily as it happened to Israel and Judah.

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10

Revelation 3:14-16 (ESV) ¹⁴ And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write ... ¹⁵ "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."

I. Faithlessness 3:6-10

- God wants our whole heart, not just an outward, formal or superficial religion.

II. Mercy 3:11-14

II. Mercy 3:11-14

- **Repentance** is a constant theme in Jeremiah.
- Some form of the words “**repent**” or “**return**” appear more than **100x**.

II. Mercy 3:11-14

- God's heart is not to exercise judgment.
- He is ready to immediately show mercy.
- But his mercy depends on Israel's acknowledgment of their guilt.

II. Mercy 3:11-14

- God asks us to return to him.
- His concern is not how far away we have gone.
- It is rather that our returning is sincere.
- Consider Christ's [Parable of the Two Sons](#) in [Matthew 21](#).

II. Mercy 3:11-14

Matthew 21:28-32 (ESV) ²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go ...

II. Mercy 3:11-14

Matthew 21:28-32 (ESV) ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

II. Mercy 3:11-14



Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track, and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor ... This process of surrender, this movement full astern, is what Christians call repentance.

– C.S. Lewis (1898 – 1963)

II. Mercy 3:11-14

- God would rather see the repentance of a serious sinner than the superficial self-righteousness of an outwardly religious person.
- But in reality, he wants the repentance of both.

II. Mercy 3:11-14

- As Paul said to his educated audience in Athens,

Acts 17:30-31 (ESV) ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

II. Mercy 3:11-14

- His question for us is this:
- Are we willing to examine our lives, turn from whatever sin is there, and give him our whole-hearted devotion?

III. Restoration 3:15-18

III. Restoration 3:15-18

- The “shepherds” was God’s title for the leaders of Israel and Judah.
- He promises that if they repent, that he will restore them and that they will have just rulers again.
- The nation will be fully restored.

III. Restoration 3:15-18

- This passage foreshadows the **New Covenant** that Jeremiah speaks of in **Jeremiah 31**.

III. Restoration 3:15-18

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV) ³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

III. Restoration 3:15-18

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV) ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

III. Restoration 3:15-18

- The physical restoration of Israel to their land was begun in the 20th Century when the nation was reborn after the Holocaust.

III. Restoration 3:15-18

- Paul reminds us that the complete spiritual restoration of Israel is still going to be accomplished.

Romans 11:25 (ESV) Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

III. Restoration 3:15-18

- God is now gathering the “fullness of the Gentiles.”
- He is inviting all of us to a restored relationship with him.

IV. Return 3:19-25

IV. Return 3:19-25

- This is a dialogue between a repentant Israel and God.
- They see that rejecting God has not brought them the freedom and enjoyment they desired.

IV. Return 3:19-25



The Lord always wants the best for his people, a desirable land...a beautiful inheritance and a stable relationship (3:19). But Israel was unfaithful to her God (3:20). Then there are tears of repentance, and God promised restoration and healing (3:21-22). The people recognize that idolatry has brought no blessings. On the contrary, the shameful worship of Baal has brought them to ruin (3:23-25).

– Issiaka Coulibaly, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, FATEAC, Ivory Coast

IV. Return 3:19-25

- In the long run, rejection of God is not the road to blessings.
- He made us for himself and always desires our best.
- For us this seems paradoxical, but submission to him brings us to the place of blessing.

IV. Return 3:19-25

- This goes against our cultural understanding of freedom as being able to do exactly as we please without hindrance.
- Yet this is a philosophy that can only fail in the end and we are already seeing the fruit of it.
- As Israel found out, it brings not freedom but regret.

IV. Return 3:19-25

- What we really need is the freedom of the artist or the athlete.
- We get to the place where we can do what is best through commitment, practice and training.

IV. Return 3:19-25

- We need the boundaries of the canvas or the playing field.
- We need to grasp the principles of the medium or the game.
- He then empowers us to fulfill his ultimate purpose.

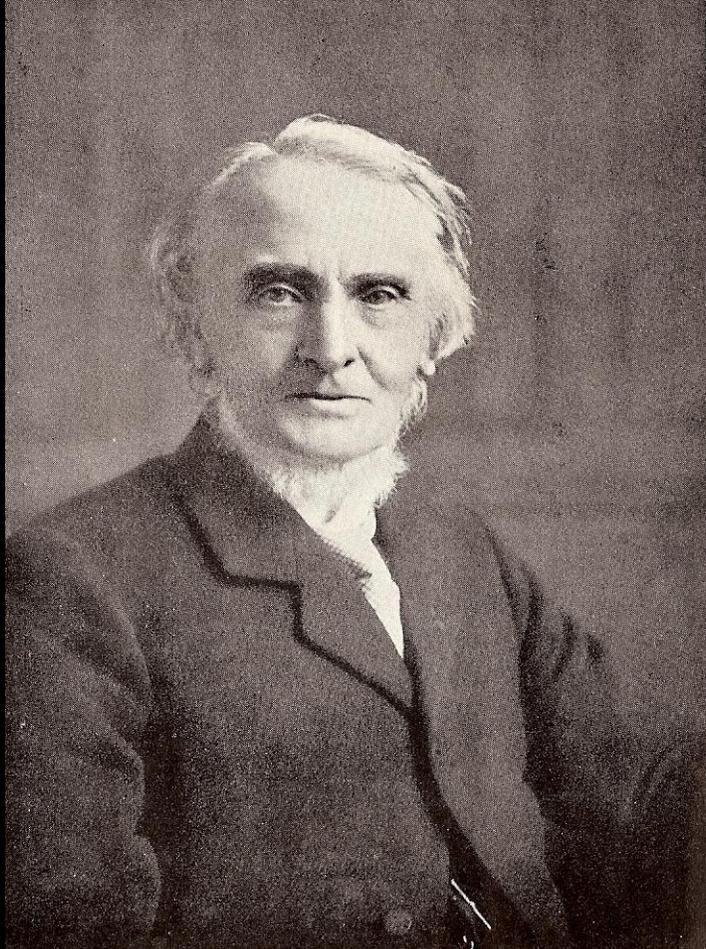
IV. Return 3:19-25

- Our rejection of God's boundaries or principles is, in the Bible, called **sin**.
- The consciousness of sin, sorrow for it, and rejection of it is called **repentance**.

IV. Return 3:19-25

- God responds to repentance by welcoming the sinner home.

IV. Return 3:19-25



We see here how God meets the penitent with a love that recognizes all his sin and yet is love. ... It is tenderest mercy that lets us see that He knows exactly what we are, and yet promises His love and forgiveness. He loves us sinners with a love that beckons us back to Himself, with a love that promises healing.

– Alexander Maclaren (1826 – 1910)

IV. Return 3:19-25

- God knows our sin to the fullest and yet desires nothing more than our restored fellowship.
- Repentance is the way to receive mercy.

Repentance

Conclusions

Repentance Conclusions

- Israel rebelled against God and experience trouble.
- Judah saw what happened and returned to God – but only in a very superficial way.

Repentance Conclusions

- They were happy to serve God as long as they could tame him and remain in charge of their own lives.
- This worked for a while – until things began to fall apart in the days of Jeremiah.

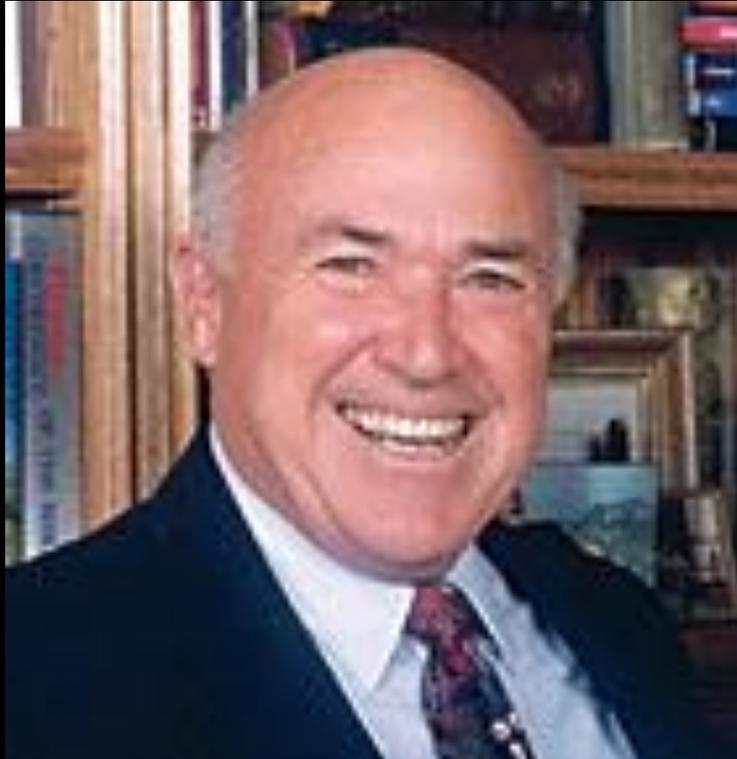
Repentance Conclusions

- Jeremiah foretells a time when Israel and Judah will be rejoined with one another – and this is already taking place.
- He also foretells a time when the nation will again turn back to God.

Repentance Conclusions

- He makes us a similar offer.
- Will we repent of our self will and utter self-determination?
- Will we acknowledge that God is the lover as well as the maker of our souls?

Repentance Conclusions



God ... does not want a half-hearted relationship with you ... He does not want you to have any interest, any love, or any yearning for anything that supersedes your love for Him. He wants first place in your life. He wants your whole heart.

– Chuck Smith (1927 – 2013)

Repentance Conclusions

- Jesus died to pay the price of our sins and now offers us complete forgiveness.
- But as with Israel's turning to God, we have to completely change the focus of our hearts and give them to him.

Repentance Conclusions

Matthew 16:24-26 (ESV) ²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

Repentance



Conclusions

[Repentance] means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into... It means killing part of yourself, under-going a kind of death.

– C.S. Lewis (1898 – 1963)

Repentance Conclusions

- It's true that it is only "a kind of death."
- It's a lowering of ourselves to experience newness of life in Him.

Repentance Conclusions

Luke 18:9-14 (ESV) ⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’

Repentance Conclusions

Luke 18:9-14 (ESV) ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Repentance Conclusions

- Are we willing to take the place of the tax collector before God – asking for mercy because we are sinners?
- Or are we determined to stand before him declaring that he must accept us because we are certainly good enough?