

COME BACK TO ME!

Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet. We see that evidenced in Jeremiah 9:1, *"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"* The Bible says in I Samuel 9:9, *"Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer."* He is called a seer because he sees what God sees and if he is an obedient servant of the Lord, he will tell what he sees. God explains it like this: *"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. 'What is the chaff to the wheat?' saith the LORD. 'Is not my word like as a fire?' saith the LORD; 'and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?'"* (Jeremiah 23:28,29). God says to the prophet, I have revealed to you the situation, so tell my people the way I see it and how I feel about their lifestyle. Speak my word faithfully, as I declare it. Do not apologize and do not compromise what I have said. My words are not like the chaff that blows away or burns up. My word doesn't burn up; it burns the chaff in life and preserves the wheat for usefulness. My word is like a hammer that breaks up even the hardest hearts that have been surrendered to the gods of this world. Therefore, preach it; hammer my truth home!

Today, I want to preach the word given to Jeremiah that perfectly matches my burden. I bring to your attention two verses to think deeply about: *"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water"* (Jeremiah 2:13). *"Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number"* (Jeremiah 2:32). In meditation this past week I saw the faces of people I at one time pastored or preached to that I see no longer on a regular basis. At times like these there is an awkwardness, because we have so little in common. To affect some vestige of conversation, we talk about weather, politics, current events and sports. Then we say, "Good talking to you; so glad to see you" and we go our way. I sometimes want to pull out my proverbial "soapbox" and start preaching, but if I did that, the next time they see me, they will probably hide from me. In my message today, I am preaching to all of you who have come to our services and also to those who in some nostalgic moment have decided to go online and

stream today's sermon or read the Pastor's Word. I want to talk to you today on how to come back to God if you have left Him and the will of God for your life. I want you to understand four truths.

1. God has never and will never leave you.

Allow me to show you how the Holy Trinity works together to keep God's children saved. Jesus said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand"* (John 10:27-29). Then the Bible says, *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise...whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption"* (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30b). You are held by the nail pierced hand of Jesus, embraced by the all-encompassing hand of the Father and sealed forever by the Holy Spirit! Jesus said, *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37).

God's word rejoins the truth of eternal security of the believer with this promise: *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Hebrews 13:5). If you think about it, we leave the dedicated life because we interpret it to be not as good or satisfying or rewarding as the lifestyle in the world. God is telling us not to be caught up with the glitter, glamor and empty promises of the world. Don't be so impressed with the world that you covet her accouterments because you have Me and I will never, ever under any circumstance leave you. The world will not love you and they will most definitely leave you, but not Me; I love you and will never leave you! Come back to me!

2. God loves you unconditionally.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). "Yet

without strength” means we were powerless to save ourselves. There was nothing about us that would compel God to love us. Moses said, *“The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations”* (Deut. 7:7-9). God doesn’t love us for what we have to offer Him; we have nothing to merit or earn God’s love. He loves us because He chose to love us. His choice is based upon His promises, not our goodness.

Some are hesitant to come back to God because they feel like they have to earn God’s favor. It takes the grace of God to save you, the grace of God to keep you and the grace of God to forgive us when we have done Him wrong. Hear God say to you, come back just as you are, I love you. Come back to Me!

3. Severe discipline awaits you if you remain complacent.

“If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips” Psalm 89:30-34). On this same theme in the New Testament, God says, *“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”* (Heb. 12:7, 11). God’s goal in spanking us when we’ve done wrong is to bring us back and make us holy. With every stripe He lays upon us He is saying, I love you; come back to me!

4. A life of perpetual and happy dedication to God can be yours starting today.

The Psalmist deals with the path back to God. First, we must repent with worshipful awe: *"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker."* Secondly, we must recognize our relationship to God: *"For He is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."* Finally, we must obey without procrastination: *"To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness"* (Psalm 95: 6-8). What is God saying? He is saying, come back to me today!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and features a large, stylized initial "J" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.