

GOD'S CALL TO RETURN "Rebellion Has Consequences"

JEREMIAH 4:1-4

Introduction: We have just completed a revival and I believe it was one of the best I have been a part of since becoming a pastor. You say well there was not anyone saved. Well what does the word "revival" mean? The dictionary has some interesting phrases which describe revival. They say: "restoration to life, consciousness, vigor, strength, etc." Then: "restoration to use" or "an awakening, in a church or community" and finally, "an evangelistic service or a series of services for the purpose of effecting a religious awakening" (www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/revival?s=t). Most who attended the services conducted this past week would say they have been re-energized to be a better Christian and to live the Christian life. This is the essence of a revival. A return back to God from a lifestyle that has not been pleasing to God or to commit to a life that will please God. It supposes that there has been a sliding back to the point that there needs to be a return to the things of God.

Israel had done exactly this. Yet, they had no desire to return to God. History even gives witness that the judgment of God fell on them because they would not follow the simple instructions given to Jeremiah from God for the people and the things they need to do to restore the relationship with God that had been forsaken. Look at **Jeremiah 4:1**, "Return unto me..." The word "return" is found 47 times in the book of **Jeremiah** alone. Look at some of these:

- They were implored to "return." **Jeremiah 3:1 (KJV)** They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. **Jeremiah 3:12 (KJV)** Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, 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, and I will not keep anger for ever. **Jeremiah 3:22 (KJV)** Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God. **Jeremiah 4:1 (KJV)** If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove. Now note a change in the use of the word "return."
- **Jeremiah 5:3; 8:4-5.** They "refused to return." **Jeremiah 5:3 (KJV)** O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; **they have refused to return.** **Jeremiah 8:4-5 (KJV)** Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? ⁵ Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden

back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they **refuse to return**. Now note another change:

- **Jeremiah 15:19 (KJV)** Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, *and* thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.
- 1. THE PLEADING OF GOD TO RETURN, Jeremiah 4:1-4. THE CALL TO RETURN, vs. 1.** You may say, well preacher, I have not gone anywhere. I am faithful to church, carry my Bible and pray every once in a while. Did you know what happened to Israel? They had not gone anywhere either. They faithfully brought the sacrifices to the Temple. They observed the Feast Days prescribed in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, et al. Yet they had taken up the idols and pagan worship that had moved their heart away from God. They knew the rituals and the things they should do. Yet their heart was far from God. They had allowed the things of the world to invade their heart and push their commitment to the God of the universe aside.
 - a. Put away the abominations, vs. 1.** The word *abomination* is a strong word and God uses it in several places. There are some things that are an abomination to God. These are practices that are not pleasing to the Lord. Note some things that did not please God.
 - 1) Man lying with another man as he would with a woman, Leviticus 20:13. Leviticus 20:13 (KJV)** If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them. In our society this is called “sodomy” or homosexuality. What is interesting is that the news media, who is supportive of the homosexual lifestyle and the “gay marriage” will tell you that the population is made up of 10% homosexuals. This includes the male sodomites and the female sodomites (commonly called Lesbians). The truth is that only 1% of the population is homosexual and yet the Christians give in to the pressure of the media to approve gay marriages, gay partnerships, gay lifestyle and we are on the verge of making this a “civil rights” issue. No it is a lifestyle choice and the people are not “born” homosexual. That is the lie of the media and those who promote the homosexual lifestyle. THIS IS AN ABOMINATION TO GOD whether the media or anyone else wants to accept it.
 - 2) Desiring the silver and gold of idolatry, Deuteronomy 7:25. Deuteronomy 7:25 (KJV)** The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold *that is on them*, nor take *it* unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God. One can justify the idolatry because it is a means of making a little money. I believe this is God saying that a person should not make their means of employment (making a living) by selling things of this nature. This is why God has connected the

- commandment in the Mosaic Law with the command in the New Testament found in **Colossians 3:5 (KJV)** *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and **covetousness, which is idolatry**.* One of the favorite practices of the believer is to justify their lifestyle and their means of living by engaging in things that are not pleasing to God.
- 3) Sacrificing thy children to the false gods, Deuteronomy 12:31.**
Deuteronomy 12:31 (KJV) *Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.* This was a pagan practice found in the people who were in the land when Israel was taken to the land of promise. These people would sacrifice their children to the gods of their culture. This is being practiced today.
 - 4) Bringing a faulty offering to the Lord, Deuteronomy 17:1.**
Deuteronomy 17:1 (KJV) *Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God *any* bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, *or* any evilfavouredness: for that *is* an abomination unto the LORD thy God.*
 - 5) Wearing clothing of the opposite sex, or cross-dressing, Deuteronomy 22:5.**
Deuteronomy 22:5 (KJV) *The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God.*
 - 6) Bringing money or “hire” of a whore or the price of a dog into the house of the LORD, Deuteronomy 23:18.**
Deuteronomy 23:18 (KJV) *Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God.*
 - 7) THE MAIN POINT OF VERSE 1 IS:** Do these things and you will not move away from God. You will stay close to God. Have you moved away from God recently? Have you engaged in things that displease God?
- b. THE CALL TO RESPONSIBILITY, vs. 2.** The proper testimony of one who knows God and lives a life that is not away from Him is found in this verse. The result of returning to God will bring a testimony of who God is and you will know His attributes. Three are listed here: truth, judgment and righteousness. God is all of these and there are more. God is interested in our interaction with these three first. When we return to the Lord there are three things that will keep us in line with Him and close to Him.
- 1) Truth.** One of the things that is very clear in this passage and the rest of the book is that God knows the truth about us. You see He knows all about us and knows even our motives for why we do the things we do. One of the elements of Israel that brought them to the place of moving away from God and not including Him in their affairs is their

satisfaction with the lifestyle they had developed. If you read this book (**Jeremiah**) you find that Israel had become very prosperous. They had all the things that life afforded and they adopted the philosophy that because they possessed these things then God must be pleased with them. They had the best houses and the expensive clothing but they did not have a good relationship with God. They had rejected the truth. Look with me at **Jeremiah 5:1 (KJV)** *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be *any* that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. Go to* **Jeremiah 7:28 (KJV)** *But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: **truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.*** **Jeremiah 9:3 (KJV)** *And they bend their tongues *like* their bow for lies: but **they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth**; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.* **Jeremiah 9:5 (KJV)** *And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and **will not speak the truth**: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and* weary themselves to commit iniquity. One of the things that will bring the judgment of God on a child of God is that they refuse to know the truth, follow the truth and speak the truth. Again lets review what Jesus said in **John 12:48 (KJV)** *He that rejecteth me, and **receiveth not my words**, hath one that judgeth him: **the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*** We are going to be held accountable for our life and the things we do and refuse to do here and now. The word will judge the lost and the saved.*

- 2) Judgment.** Several times in this book God reminds Israel of the coming judgment. Notice He mentions that it is coming from the North several times. **Jeremiah 1:14-15 (KJV)** ¹⁴ *Then the LORD said unto me, **Out of the north an evil shall break forth** upon all the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁵ For, lo, **I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north**, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. **Jeremiah 4:6 (KJV)** *Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. **Jeremiah 6:1 (KJV)** *O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Bethhaccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction. Do you happen to know where heaven is? It is in the north. God continues to give clues to the people who claim to know Him that there is coming Judgment. It will be done by the people of the north but the movement and motivation of these people to come and bring judgment upon the people of Israel, who are the people of God, is done by God. He happens to be in the North Himself. Do you realize there is coming***

judgment? For the lost person it is the Great White Throne Judgment (**Revelation 20**). For the believer it will be the Judgment Seat of Christ (**Romans 14:10; 2Corinthians 5:10**).

3) Righteousness. This is simply the “right living” which God requires of His children. If we do not live by righteousness we will be chastened by God. This is the motivation found in the next point, “RIGHT LIVING.”

c. THE CALL TO RIGHT LIVING, vs. 3-4.

1) Plow deep, vs. 3. Fallow ground breakup. The nation of Israel was an agricultural economy. They were a people of farmers and livestock owners. Any farmer knows what it is to “break up fallow ground.” A farmer will plow his land every year and eventually there will develop what is called a “hard pan.” What happens is that the plow is set at a certain depth to prepare the ground for planting seeds. Farmers know that a seed has to be planted at a certain depth to be sure it germinates and begins to grow. If a farmer does not plow deep every few years the moisture will not be supplied to the plant the way it should be and the crop will not yield an abundant crop. The “fallow ground” here is the heart. If we expect to have fruit in our lives we must be willing to break up the hard ground so the seed can take root and bear fruit. Note the antithesis of this which is not to “sow among thorns.” If we are perceptive to the scripture we know that one of the results of the sin of Adam in **Genesis 3:18** was that “**Thorns also and thistles whall it bring forth to thee...**” In other words the ground would bring forth “thorns and thistles.” If we do not keep the soil of our heart broken up there will never be any fruit. We need to realize that one of the reasons we need to “plow deep” is because of the **hardness of our heart. Mark 16:14 (KJV) Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.** Hardness of heart comes about when we reject the truth and evidence of the word of God.

2) Put away the foreskin, vs. 4. Foreskin removal. Here we come to an important principle of the scripture. Anyone familiar with God's work in the people of God, beginning with Abraham, circumcision was a significant function of the believer. For Abraham and the people of Israel, circumcision was designed for two reasons. One, it was to signify the sign of the covenant God had made with Abraham and his descendants, the nation of Israel. **Genesis 17:11 (KJV) And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.** Second, it was a mark of distinction that would separate the people of God from the nations of the world. There are two passages of scripture we need to examine in light of this statement of circumcision. Three times God told Israel to “circumcise the heart” in **Deuteronomy 10:16 (KJV) Circumcise therefore the**

foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. **Deuteronomy 30:6 (KJV)** And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. **Jeremiah 4:4 (KJV)** Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings. These give the reason Israel needed to circumcise their heart. When we come to the New Testament we need to understand this principle. LOOK WITH ME AT: **Romans 2:28-29 (KJV)** ²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: ²⁹ But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.* This passage is not saying that we are “spiritual Jews.” It is saying that we must understand the significance of “spiritual circumcision.” The Jew who was circumcised was obligated to keep the Law. If he did not then his circumcision was counted as uncircumcision. We need to remember that man physically is born uncircumcised. The circumcision was a picture of what needed to happen spiritually and be circumcised in the heart. That means one must remove the desires of the flesh from their heart. The heart is the seat of our emotions. We must willfully decide that we are not going to satisfy the desires of the flesh and choose to serve God. That is the issue in **Romans 2:28-29**. Yet there is another issue found in **Colossians 2:11 (KJV)** *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.* This is the thing God wants to do for you and it happens only in salvation, the new birth.

2. **The Plan of God for Judgment, Jeremiah 4:5-13.**
3. **The Provision of God for Returning, Jeremiah 4:14.**
4. **The Problem God had with Israel, Jeremiah 4:15-22.**