

Zechariah 2

Zechariah's Message

Yes, we all know that Zechariah was called to be a prophet for the Lord, Jehovah. He was a man who had come from a long line of prophets, being the grandson of Iddo. In the very first words of his book, he is told by God's angel, that the beginning of his message to the people was to be these words from God, "Return to me, that I might return to you."

What is said in these few words of God to Zechariah is very revealing about the whole structure of a man's relationship with God. God is saying that He is ready to receive His children back from their time in punishment, but He is also saying that the whole process is contingent upon the people making the decision of returning and then in getting up in the morning and making the actual journey back to God. God's outstretched and open hand of forgiveness is contingent upon the willingness of the individual to reach out and take it. He is willing; but are we? If we are, we need to walk to Him.

When you stop and think about it, there is a bit more here than the simple extension of the hand of forgiveness. It is saying that the greatest good possible is waiting those who do take up the challenge and return to God. The very idea of 'God' is so big, so powerful, so wonderful, that it is compelling in its own right. God, the all powerful and all wise God, the greatest and biggest idea that man can ever contemplate is making an extension of His hand to me, so that "I" might be bettered. It is the supernatural come down to natural man. What a gift!

Zechariah's mission is to keep this hope-filled message before the people, motivating them to stay for the whole job. It is not as if they have done wrong, been forced to pay the price, and now with the sentence for their sins completed, everything is back together as it once was: all paid, all clear. Their relationship with God had been shattered by their sin. It is all so very different from that path we are used to in our modern society: one of "off to prison and then if I am good, I can get an early release". It is an offer of peace and position made to the justly condemned criminal, a new relationship, a new hope, a return to the king's table. It starts with an act of submission, a simple change of heart, mind, will, action and the taking again of the pledge of sovereignty unto God and God alone. It is the "return to me".

Further as to what this phrase means is that while He may be our father, He must first be recognized as our Lord, King, and Sovereign. This is an act of confession that God is the king and that I am not. This simple act of submission to Him as Lord must be recognized or no relationship can be had. The rebel, me, must surrender and declare my allegiance to God the King, again, by returning to Him. It is as simple as that.

So, when I do come to Him, recognizing Him as the absolute Lord-King-Sovereign of my life again, the civilities of a restored covenant relationship are achieved. Then, and only then, is He justly free to extend that hand of forgiveness and restore our relationship, with the proper perspectives all around: God as Lord, and man as submissive servant. Oh what a lovely thought it all is; peace with God, union restored, a future ahead of us, once again.

This idea of 'return to me' is so much like the act of conversion. It requires that I hear (see and recognize God as God), that I believe (totally surrendering, as well as come to a point of acceptance), that I, in the process of my surrender, make the heartfelt overture of repentance, and then that I confess that I believe him to be the one and only Lord, (cutting my strings verbally with the world order) and then to demonstrate my new loyalty by my submission, doing what ever He asks me to do, whether or not I understand it all or want to even do it. If He asks me to be baptized, immersed in water, then I will do it, because He is now seen as the one who should be my Lord and Sovereign. In so doing, I am now raised as a His child, a child of the King. He becomes the absolute Lord of my life, when I return to Him.

By starting out in such a fashion as Zechariah suggests, we have a mirror that shows us the nature of our relationship with God, for all time. In every age, it all starts with our willingness to surrender to Him as Lord. Belief in God, or in Jesus, is really the beginning of surrender, the returning to Him.

If we do that, if we return to Him, it is a sure bet that He will return to us and all will be right with Him once again. It is a promise written with an eternal glow all over it!! It is wonderful and it is freeing; it is joy unbounded, a sure and lasting freedom from the curse of all of those sins and misdeeds we have done in the past,-purity restored!!! It is the power needed to see a people through to the completion of the rebuilding of the city walls, temple and market gardens.

We are often tempted to get the whole idea of evangelism wrong in these days. Some, who go out to preach the gospel, have accepted the idea that the cultures of the world should not be 'corrupted' by modern, western thought, and so they speak a soft gospel. This is tragic, and it is ultimately cruel.

Zechariah did not preach a soft gospel to the Jews there on the road back to Jerusalem. In spite of sore feet, troublesome voices along the track and the daunting task of rebuilding the walls, Zechariah took a hard stand and told the people there on the road to Jerusalem, 'Return to God that He might return to you.' The statement, "You mean after we have walked all this way, that we have not proven our faith yet?" could well have been the retort to this man of God, but those wonderful pilgrims kept on walking, and growing in their new relationship with God. That hard message that Zechariah spoke, produced a softened heart, and a might alliance with God. It can still do the same today.