

## return .....

The book of Jeremiah tugs at my heart so strongly because it underlines and highlights the unconditional love of God. God's compassion and untiring patience are revealed through the deep yearnings of the prophet Jeremiah.

Israel had backslidden into all sorts of sin and Jeremiah was pleading with them to return to God. In fact Jeremiah mentions the word **return** on 40 occasions. In chapters 3 and 4 Jeremiah employs several images to bring home to us what it means to genuinely return to God.

In chapter 4v3 returning to God is like *ploughing a field*. Our hearts need to be ploughed regularly to allow the seed of God's Word to get a firm hold. Ultimately this will bring us back into a right relationship with God and into a place of bearing fruit.

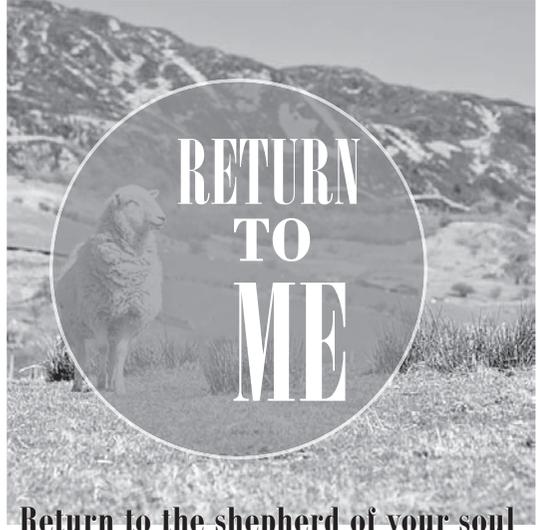
One of the subtle things about backsliding is that it doesn't "just happen". It is not as if we decide to backside, but rather a consistent slide into sin, combined with an unrepentant heart over a long period of time. Backsliding is an Old Testament word used only by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea. Bearing in mind the role of the O.T. prophet, this shouldn't surprise us. The prophet's deep yearning was to see Israel return to God. The word used in the Hebrew for 'backslide' means disloyalty or unfaithfulness.

### **PRAISE** the Lord for:

- ★ Prison edition being distributed into 360 prisons throughout USA
- ★ Purchase of a digital printer for Cuban edition of Challenge
- ★ Recent trip to UK where Carl and Graeme met with **Good-news** Board and other contacts looking at possibility of entering Europe with a gospel newspaper
- ★ Extra orders placed for our Easter edition of Challenge

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**Return to the shepherd of your soul**

In Jeremiah 2v2 backsliding is pictured as *harlotry*. The nation of Israel was married to Jehovah God, but Israel's persistent sin is seen by God as a betrayal of that relationship. Like Israel, our love for God can grow cold, and as a result other loves come into our lives causing us to be disloyal and faithless towards God.

In Jeremiah 3v22 backsliding is like a *sickness*. It begins with a secret infection of sin which leads to a loss of appetite – spiritual appetite. We find our appetite for God's word, prayer, a passion for souls has shrivelled up. We need to humble ourselves before God and confess our sin.

*Continued over*

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Then in Jeremiah 4v4 backsliding is associated with *surgery*. Israel had become a master at putting their confidence in external rituals, which served as a panacea for their conscience. The problem was Israel was not willing to allow God to do heart surgery. God desires truth in the inward parts, not outward show.

When we become Christians it is like joining the army. Jeremiah 4v5-6 and 19-21 indicates that backsliding in our Christian walk is synonymous with disobeying our commander.



Instead of serving God we are serving Satan. However, the Christian soldier hears the trumpet call of God and responds to it. He realises he has betrayed the love of God, and returns to his commander in repentance to serve effectively.

Returning to God is like taking a much needed bath. In Jeremiah 4v14 returning to God means having a new beginning.

Returning to God is also like growing up. In Jeremiah 4v22 He makes it clear that backsliding is childish and foolish. Whilst it is important that Christians should be child-like in their trust of God, they are not to be childish in their behaviour.

Is it any wonder that God through His prophets cries out to His people to return! Return to Me.

{ CARL CARMODY  
EDITOR CHALLENGE }

## Ongoing supply of testimonies

If you would like to share your testimony through the printed page please email [carl@challengenews.org](mailto:carl@challengenews.org) for further information

### PRAYER needed for:

- ★ **Cobus and Christa Britz** as they head up the work in South Africa. From this hub we have distribution into various countries – Botswana, Zimbabwe, Malawi and various countries with the Military edition
- ★ Project funding for 2019 Impact Africa trip. Key areas – prison ministry, children's ministry and hospital ministry
- ★ **Ananda and Grace Pula** in Malawi. They face much opposition physically, spiritually and financially as they work in Malawi. Please pray for them and their children that they will continue to know the Lord's comfort and strength in times of trouble
- ★ The new project commencing soon in **Cuba**. The Spanish edition will be a loose leaf version stapled in the left hand corner and initially distributed with the Western Baptist Convention and once established likewise in the Eastern Baptist Convention



### MY RESPONSE

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With God's help I would like to be a partner in supporting the ministry at Challenge financially :

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