Return & Renew

Lamentations 5:21

"Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old".

Lamentations is a reflection of the heart of a prophet named Jeremiah as he weeps (laments) over the sin and resultant fall of Judah and Jerusalem.

How can we, like Judah of old, return to the Lord?

I. We can return, if we have
a <u>desperate desire</u> to do so
"<u>Turn</u> thou us unto thee" –Cause us to return to You.

II. We can return, if we have
a <u>dependency on God</u> to do so
"Turn <u>thou us</u> unto thee"

III. We can return,
If God <u>makes it happen</u>
"Turn <u>thou us</u> …. And <u>we shall be turned</u>"

A God produced Repentance Involves <u>A change of Mind, Attitude, and Will</u>

When God does the work,
We experience <u>renewal</u> (restoration of good fruit, fellowship and blessings)

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Lamentations is a reflection of the heart of a prophet named Jeremiah as he weeps (laments) over the sin and resultant fall of Judah and Jerusalem.

Jeremiah was called by God from before his birth to be a prophet (a preacher).
Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (Jer. 1:5)

He would be a reluctant prophet offering the excuse that he was not a good public speaker and was reluctant because of the negative message he would have to preach.

Jeremiah is noted as the "weeping prophet" as he had a sensitive compassionate heart for his Jewish people and because of the calamities that were coming upon them due to their persistent idolatry and sin against Yahweh.

Jer 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!

He would initially live his first 20 years during the reign of the good king Josiah. He would remember some good days during Josiah's reign, however, Josiah would die in battle and Jeremiah would be called by God to preach a message of Judgment for most of his life.

God gave Judah and Jerusalem ample warning of coming judgment due to their idolatry (God-substitutes). He would use the preaching of Isaiah (740 BC) (a 150 plus year advance warning) and then preaching of Jeremiah (627 BC) followed by the preaching of Ezekiel (592 BC).

The Lord through Isaiah offered an opportunity to repent:
Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it]. (Isaiah 1:18-20)

The people of Judah and Jerusalem (Zion) would not repent, so God allowed Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon to conquer Judah in 586 BC. Judah and Jerusalem would be torn down to the ground, plundered, and burned. The Walls, Solomon's Temple, and the City was in ruins and ashes.

The book of Lamentations is a funeral dirge with each of the 5 chapters being an acrostic poem describing the horrible effects of a people and city who came under God's judgment.

How can we, like Judah of old, return to the Lord?

I. We can return, if we have

a <u>desperate desire</u> to do so

"<u>Turn</u> thou us unto thee" –Cause us to return to You.

The prayer request of Jeremiah reflects the heart of one who is utterly worn out due to the calamitous results of sin. It is the yearning of his heart that he and the people he represents be restored to God.

It has been my observation that people do what they want to do. People don't come to the Lord unless they want to. They must desire a relationship with God or a desire to have fellowship restored. There must be a "want to" or a desire to return to the Lord.

We are creatures with a "free will." We have an ability to make choices. We must desire to "turn" (Hebrew "Shoov" – to do an about face and turn back to God; to return to the place from which we departed. Note: the Hebrew word for repentance comes from this word (Teshoova)

The N.T. term for repentance is metanoia (Literally to have a change of mind). Jesus taught that repentance is needed by all See: Luke 13:1-5
Luke 13:3
I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Acts 17:30
And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

We must desire to be rid of any God-substitutes that we have deliberately brought into our lives. "Idols in his heart" (Ezekiel 14:3,4,7)

Repentance involves a TURNING FROM SIN and a TURNING TOWARD GOD

Ezekiel 18:30
Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. <u>Repent</u>, and <u>turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.</u>

Acts 26:20

But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Note: The turning in Lamentations 5:21 is "**unto thee, O LORD**" It is not a turning to religion; nor is it a turning to anyone or anything outside of the LORD.

When it comes to "salvation" Repentance is a willingness to Turn from anything that is keeping you from Christ, either for salvation (for the unbeliever) or for fellowship (for the believer).

Is there a desire in your heart to be right with God? You will never be in right relationship with the Lord unless you earnestly desire to be.

II. We can return, if we have

a <u>dependency on God</u> to do so

"Turn <u>thou us</u> unto thee"

The Bible teaches that no one independently seeks after God. (Romans 3:11 - There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God). No one on their own or unaided (by Divine help) will pursue the Lord. God must open our heart; He must draw us to Himself. As the Lord Jesus said: John 6:44 "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him…"

This is why Jeremiah asks the Lord to Turn us unto Himself. God must bring us to Himself for Salvation and for restored fellowship.

The Lord is describing repentance here. And repentance never happens without God's granting it.

Repentance is a Work of God (in a sinner's heart)

- Repentance is properly the act of the sinner; it is for this reason that God commands men to repent, and holds them responsible for obeying or disobeying that command.

Scripture: Acts 17:31; Luke 13:3

- And yet, in an ultimate sense, it is God who makes possible that repentance. Man repents because God invites him to do so, and because God graciously teaches that man the horror of his sin and provides a way of repentance.

Scripture: Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:24,25

Acts 11:18
When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath <u>God</u> also to the Gentiles <u>granted repentance unto life</u>.

See: 2 Tim. 2:24-26
2 Timothy 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; <u>if God peradventure will give them repentance</u> to the acknowledging of the truth.

The good news is that the Lord does desire to give you repentance. He does desire to turn to back to Himself.

See II Peter 3:1-9; 15 – Repentance is the Will of God

2 Peter 3:9
The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

There is a difference between the Decreed will of God (which is God's determination based on both His foreknowledge and foreordaination of all things) and His Desired will (which is God's wish; what God would want to happen, though He may or may not necessarily decree it to happen).

In terms of God's desired will, He wants you to turn back to Him!

Would you make it your prayer request to God that He would so work in your heart that you would return to Him?

III. We can return,

If God <u>makes it happen</u>

"Turn <u>thou us</u> …. And <u>we shall be turned</u>"

If God causes us to return when we shall return!

When the Lord turns our hearts back to Him, then our hearts are back to Him for sure!

No people can return you to the Lord. Your parents cannot return you to the Lord. They can pray for you. They can give you God's message. But it only happens when God does the work in us.

Why do some profess faith and have no change of life, no love for Christ, and no long term commitment in service, whereas others profess faith and do demonstrate a newness of life, do love Christ, and endure till the end? Answer: God turned them to Himself.

When God makes it happen, we get the genuine return. When God does the work, it is real and lasting. It involves God changing the heart (the very core of our being).

We realize genuine repentance which involves the total you (intellect, emotion, and will).

The components of repentance

Note: Repentance involves the entire man, just as does Biblical faith. Thus, it is spoken of as partaking of three distinguishable elements.

a. A God produced Repentance Involves A change of Mind

The intellectual element - *a knowledge of the truth regarding sin*

Meta – change noia = mind

That is, repentance is based upon a recognition and apprehension of what sin really is and what it means.

Scripture: Psalm 51:3; Revelation 9:21 (See: Rev. 9:20-21)

b. A God produced Repentance Involves A change of ATTITUDE

The emotional element - *a genuine hatred of the sin which the natural man cherishes, as well as a genuine love for the truth which the natural man despises*

Repentance involves a total change of emotional attachment: that which was once cherished is now feared and despised, and that which was once regarded with contempt is now embraced as of the highest value.

A hatred for the enslaving sin; An utter sick & tired attitude toward sin

Scripture: See: 2 Corinthians 7:9,10;

Note: Remember that sorrow does not necessarily indicate true repentance (cf. Lk 18:23). The individual may be sorry for the effects of his sin, rather than for the guilt of the sin (cf 1 Sam 15). However, whatever the external, emotional manifestation may be, repentance will always involve a change of mind with reference to the focus of the individual's love, to that which he regards as precious and that which he regards as contemptible.

(examples: The Rich man who would not sell his goods to follow Christ; Judas Iscariot who was sorry that his plan didn't work out; King Saul who was sorry that Samuel was so upset with him)

Hebrews 12:17

For ye know how that afterward, when he (Esau) would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

c. A God produced Repentance Involves <u>A change of WILL</u>
The volitional element - *a change of purpose, a decision to seek pardon*

Strong refers to this as an inward turning from sin, a disposition to seek pardon and cleansing. This inward resolve or change of purpose is more than reformation; it is a decision to allow the Spirit to accomplish God's purposes in me. This volitional aspect makes itself known in "fruits worthy of repentance" (Lk 3:8).

Scripture: Psalm 51:10-13; Acts 2:38; 26:20

When God does the work,
We realize genuine repentance which evidences itself in good fruit

Matthew 3:8
Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Acts 26:20
But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

When God does the work,
We experience renewal (restoration of fellowship and blessings)

"…renew our days as of old" – Restore what I used to have; Restore what I have been missing.

Jesus said to the Ephesian church which had left her first love:
Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Jesus said to the lukewarm Laodicean Christians:
Rev. 3:19
As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

God desires to forgive more than we desire to be forgiven!
Ps 32:5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

If God expects us to repeat forgiveness toward others, He is many more times willing to forgive us our repeated offenses

Luke 17:3-4

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. [4] And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

We must be willing to request it of Him!

> **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** (1 John 1:9)
>
> "If we confess" - present tense, indicating a habitual or continual practice.
>
> "Confess" = homo logeo. Lit. "to say the same thing." To have the same opinion of our sin as God has.
>
> NOTE: Confession is not merely to say "I'm sorry" but it is ***to see our sin for what it is and admit it!** (not to excuse it, redefine it [as "sickness"] or explain it away)
>
> "Our sins" - must take personal responsibility for our sin (cp. Ps. 32:1ff).
>
> ILLUS: a man and the counsellor - Wiersbe, p. 482
>
> "Our sins" = hamartias; to miss the mark; to come short of God's standard of holiness (Rom. 3:23).
>
> "He is faithful" - another attribute of God is His faithfulness - Hymn - "Great is Thy Faithfulness"
>
> Every time you confess to God, you will be forgiven (not for restored relationship to God but for a restored fellowship with God).
>
> God is more anxious to forgive than we are to confess. His forgiveness is faithful, dependable, trustworthy, reliable, always present. God will never say, "I will not forgive" to the one who genuinely confesses.
>
> "He is ... just" - God is righteous in His act of forgiving His saints.

The reason God is "just" to forgive is because His just demands against sin have been satisfied. The penalty has been paid. Now He is both just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

"Forgive" - primarily means to send forth or send away. It pictures a removal and a carrying away of something.

Our sins are "removed as far as the east is from the west..."

"Cleanse" - to wash and make pure. Not only does God remove (forgive) our sin, but He erases every trace of that sin from His holy presence.

Sad to say, many Christians confess their sins, but doubt God's desire ("faithful") or ability ("just") to forgive and cleanse. Hence, they live life with a load of false guilt.

The accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10) may try to throw dirt back into your face that has been removed by God (EX: Zech. 3:1-7).

"When he reminds you of your past, remind him of his future!" (Rev. 20:1-3, 10).

"All unrighteousness" - not a trace is left

"All unrighteousness" - all unjust thoughts, words, and deeds are scrubbed clean by God. Every lack of conformity to the moral law of God is rectified.

"What is the secret of forgiveness? It is God's faithfulness and righteousness - not our feelings or remorse, nor anything in ourselves - that cleanses us from all unrighteousness" (David Hocking, I John, p. 22).