

Return to the Lord

By Paris Reidhead*

Before we go to prayer, may we go to the Word. Hosea, Chapter 6 and the first 3 verses, but particularly the first clause of the 3rd verse. This ought to be an encouragement to all of us as we hear what the Prophet Hosea said to his day and to his generation, and also to us. Hosea, Chapter 6, and the first 3 verses I shall read:

“Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the later and former rain unto the earth.”

Now there is so much one could say about this rich passage, but you will notice that it begins by the Prophet exhorting the people to return to the Lord. “Come and let us return unto the Lord” is the Spirit of God speaking to those whom He has disciplined. He proceeds to say, “The Lord hath torn, and he hath smitten.” And it behooves us to remember that anything that touches us has first gone through His nail pierced hand to reach us. And, believe it or not, most of us would never think to pray if we were not torn and smitten, either by personal grief, inward grief or distress, or some outward circumstance that crowds us to Christ.

We have often defined security as a state where we do not have to trust the Lord any longer. And most of us are pressing on, if we possibly can, to that place of “security.” But the Lord loves us too much to ever allow us to come to that place, and should it be that security does arrive in one area, He immediately makes us dreadfully insecure in another. He continues to smite, and He continues to tear, so that He will be able ever, always to have a hook in our heart to draw us to Him.

Now let us face this. Let us just recognize this, that as long as we live in the flesh, until that last day we breathe where He takes us through the veil into His Presence, there is going to be some kind of tearing and smiting. There will be, because as a sculptor whose concern is the perfection of the image in the marble, He has made us in Christ living stones. But that is not enough. He wants to conform us to the image of His Son. And as long as there is time for us, there will be dealings of God with us. And you will become increasingly sensitive as you walk on with Him, and will find yourself torn as much by a sense of grieving the Spirit, as perhaps you were at some great catastrophe in your early years of your walk with the Lord. So let us establish as a principle that God’s dealings are as sovereignly and graciously in the tearing and the smiting, in that which He allows to touch us that has the effect of pressing us and crowding us to Him, as He is in the forgiving and the pardoning, and the dealing with us. Now it is very hard for us to see this, very, very difficult for us to see this.

We generally think that the blessings are the things which come that make life easier for us, and the hard things are from the enemy, and this is not so. “He hath torn us; He hath smitten us.” Well He may have used someone else’s hatchet, or hammer, or chisel, or rasp, but it was His hand that guided how deep the hatchet cut, and His hand that put the point of the chisel and held the level of the swing, so that nothing was taken off any more than He intended. Now if you will establish this, if you will accept what Hosea says, if you will see this as a principle in your life, nothing can touch you but what Father lets it, and you will be content to say, Yes, He hath torn, He hath smitten. You won’t have to wait until there is a great catastrophe, but in the daily dealings of God with your heart, you are going to say this is the Lord crowding me to Him. This is the Lord pressing me.

Now if you do not, if you do not, He is prepared to use even a sharper hatchet, and a longer chisel, and a heavier hammer. We have learned this, haven’t we? Why not take the gentle ministries of the Spirit of God, and save both Him and us, having to use the heavy tools. Oh, to give us sensitive hearts.

But notice what He says, “Let us go to the Lord.” Certainly these things which seem to be so against us are for us. And be patient. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. He has been in the grave four days, and lo stinketh, was what they said of Lazarus. And the third day is the day when corruption has actually set in. And when we would feel that things are utterly at the end, and that everything is gone, and the whole world has decomposed around us, right in the midst of all of this, He will raise us up. He will raise us up. And how many things there are that have to

go down into death the third day before they can come up in life. And so He said, Do not feel necessarily that when God has torn, and God has smitten, that right at that moment there is going to be the reward as vigorously and as brilliantly as in the case of Job, twice as many cattle, and twice as many oxen. But He will revive in the second day, and your hope wanes; and the third day when it is gone... But do not let your hope wane. Do not let your confidence go. For He has set Himself. If you will return, if you will see that is His hand, if you will meet Him on His terms, then He said He will revive though it is the second day; He will raise you up though it is the 3rd day. Again we come to this place of patience and hope, and perseverance and prayer. He has not promised that the moment that we cry... Oh, He has promised, but there are areas of our dealings with us when the prayer is answered, but it has not been answered yet. You say, Well I can't comprehend that. I can. I can.

I recall with little Sonny when he was a lad, too young actually... It seems that so many times parents allow things to come into their children's lives, or get things for their children when they are too young, but he wanted a bicycle. We had bicycle at every meal. We had it for breakfast, we had it for lunch, and we had it for supper. We had pictures of bicycles on our plates, and under the plates, in front of the plates. We had them posted on the wall. We had them up on the mirror. Bicycles were the sole topic of conversation. And finally my wife and I talked it over and prayed it over and we said, All right, Sonny, you can have a bicycle. Christmas. That was about the middle of April. We figured his feet would be a little longer. But you know we still had bicycles three times a day. But it was different. It was not, Daddy, can I have a bicycle. When I get that bicycle, oh when I get my bicycle, what I am going to do. It was living in the sole confidence that what he had been promised would be performed. And he was not the least surprised when Christmas morning... we had gone to the neighbor's the night before and had gotten the bicycle, and set it up by the tree. He was expecting it. We had not said anything about when it would be. He said, It's the color I knew it was going to be. He had not said anything about color. It was there. And the April before it was settled in his mind. Oh, that you can understand that when God allows dealings with you that you meet on His terms of brokenness and submission, and faith, that He will revive in the second day; in the third day He will raise you up.

We are not dealing, we are not praying as those who vainly eat the air. We are not praying as those who simply are wishfully thinking. We are dealing with a covenant keeping God who said, "He will revive in the two days, and in the third day He will raise us up; and we shall live in His sight."

But notice the condition. Always a condition. Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord. Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord. Everything that God has done for you up until tonight is not a fraction or a fragment of what He wants to do tomorrow. And if you should ever gain for yourself the feeling that what God has done up until tonight is the ends of His dealings, you have greatly misunderstood God. Why He is going to have surprises and blessings for you through the endless ages of eternity.

Oh, how pathetic it is to find people that have out lived their love for the Lord. Do not ever let it happen to you. Do not ever come to the place where you say, Well, I've got what God intended me to have. Pity the poor folks that don't have what I have. Oh, let us not ever let that happen to us. God has so much more that He wants to show His people than His people have ever been willing to receive.

D. L. Moody¹ heard the father of Studd and Lord Baron Radstock. C. T. Studd's father Edward Studd, and Lord Radstock speaking together beside the hedges rows there in England, and he was sitting there down on a bench reading, and from the other side he heard these two godly men walking up and down, talking together, and Mr. Studd said, Lord Radstock, You know, I do not believe the world has ever seen what God can do through a man that is wholly yielded to Him. And Mr. Moody said, he closed his book, he did not need to hear any more, he did not need to see any more, he bowed his head, he said, Lord, I do not know whether it will or not, but by Thy grace I want to be that man for my generation. I do not believe that for so much as a moment that the world has yet to see what God can do through a man or through a woman that is wholly yielded to Him. I do not believe that any of us have experienced all that God has for us. And so we have a condition.

¹ Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

We shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord. How are you going to be that man? That woman? There is only one condition: To follow on to know. What does this mean? It means to walk in implicit obedience to what God is saying to you now. Because the moment that truth and light comes, to which we bow not, bow not our hearts, well there is a sense in which God cannot go any further. How many times, however, He teaches us something. I found this in my experience. God will lead me into a relationship with Him, or an understanding of truth. There will be tremendous pressure, tremendous heaviness of heart, and just that goading of the Spirit of God to lay hold, to lay hold; and as soon as this is laid hold of, and it is experienced, then the Lord says, Now you have that, hold that, and come here.

Do you follow? See what I have reference to? He gives you that which is His will, your need, at that time; and then He says, Now hold on to this, claim, keep this; Hold it. Treasure it; and He leads you on to another area. It is not that you have abandoned this, but it is like parts for a car you know. When you are building a car, you say, There is the motor. Now we will just keep it there all nicely wrapped in plastic. We do not want it to get rusty. But we do not need it yet. You have got to get something to put it in. There has got to be always... This is tied to that, and both of these are joined to the other, and always this is the way the Lord deals with churches, and deals with us. He is gathering together principles, He is gathering together truths, He is gathering together that which is necessary to form for the Lord Jesus Christ the vehicle for the revelation of how wonderful Christ is. Now frankly, I do not think anywhere yet, by any means, and I am pretty well abreast of what has happened in the last 25 years, and what is happening currently, and what is happening in various parts of the world; and I do not believe we have seen today all that God wants to do. But if we will follow on to know the Lord, if we do not see the final gathering together of all the truths to make the vehicle that Christ wants, we are at least going to have contributed to generations who follow us. And so the principle becomes clear: If we follow on to know the Lord, we shall know. And thus it becomes to you, moving into the Word, into the truth, and at no place settling down, saying, This is it. I think sometimes that Christians are often like a little puppy that inherits a butcher shop. And given by the master, didn't have any relatives, so he gives it to the puppy. And the puppy goes in. He has been kept out before, and nobody is there, and he goes and he gets a hold of a piece of meat out of the case. It is all his and he goes and gets a hold of a piece of meat out of the case. It is all his, and he runs off with one little piece. Woof, woof, woof, woof, he runs down the road, and he forgets the whole butcher shop is his.

Now that is a crude illustration of a wonderful truth. People take a hold of one truth, and they just bark the rest of their life and guard that one truth, and do not want anybody to get to it. There they are. I have friend who believe... who were close relatives of John Calvin, and I love them, and I believe that I am somewhat the same family. But they have sat for years and years barking around the truths that they got back at that point. Well that is in the Word, but that is not all that is in the Word. Do you see? That is there, but that is not all that is there. But there is all the rest.

Oh that we can understand that it is truth joined to truth and balanced. And if we follow on to know the Lord, He will lead us into the balanced understanding of truth, into the balanced relationship with the Lord, with our families, with the church, and it is this I believe is what is in the mind of the Prophet, if not at least in the mind of the Spirit for us through the Words of the Prophet that He wants us to follow on in obedience to His teaching, and obedience to His leading, and obedience to His work in our hearts. And in so doing, will give to us that ever enlarging, and ever expanding, ever increasing knowledge of God.

Jeremiah had it, put it so beautifully in the 24th Chapter, in the 7th Verse, and "I will give them an heart to know Me that I am the Lord, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart." "I will give them an heart to know the Lord."

Has God given you an heart to know Him? Has God given you an eagerness to enter into everything that is His Word? Has He given you a desire to move on, to follow on, to know the Lord? Oh, how grateful you should be, how grateful we should be if God has blessed us with a heart to know the Lord. Then we understand that it is not only to have a heart to know the Lord, but we shall know if we follow on to know the Lord, move step by step, on into all that God has for us.

Well let us ask God to give us that kind of heart, give us that kind of commitment, that kind of obedience, that kind of faith, that realizes that He is doing something... I have often thought and said that God is doing today something so wonderful that if He told us what He was doing we would not believe it. It is a grand day to live, to see the Lord working, and to believe that the

ends of the ages have allowed us to explore and exploit so many of the areas which seemingly could be the answer, which may be part of an answer so that we can join together truth to truth, and principle to principle, until by His grace and power of God we have afforded the Spirit of God the vehicle He needs to reveal how wonderful the Lord Jesus is. And so our Word, Then we shall know if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the later and former rain unto the earth.

Take hold of it. Take hold of it. Then shall we know if we follow on to know. Let us move on with Him step by step into truth, into the balance of truth, into the whole of truth, in order that we can thus know all that He has for us.

Well I am glad I have the privilege of serving the Lord in the 20th century. I think I was born a hundred years too late for my own enjoyment, but that is beside the point. This is a grand day to know Him. Oh, to think that if God could break in to New York City, now, with this world gathered here, the ends of the earth are here; just think of people that are here on diplomatic missions, and educational missions, and political missions. Just think of this street, 44th Street. If a revival of God could come that would only cut across Manhattan Island from 42 to 46 and sweep right straight from the Hudson to the East River, the ends of the earth would know; because down at the other end of our avenue, our street rather, is the United Nations, with delegations from all over the world. Oh, that God could give us the confidence to believe that if we will return and come to Him, recognizing all of His dealings that He will revive in the 2nd day, or in the 3rd day, He will raise us up if we follow on to know the Lord.

I'd like to believe that God wants to do something so big that when it is done nobody can touch it and say, Look what I did. No one can get the glory for it. Let us believe God to use us in some way to such an end, whether it is to inaugurate principles or to establish principles, or to share them, or experience them, or find them, or to cover them again, I do not know, but let us just go on, follow on to know the Lord, and see what is in His mind when He says, He shall come unto us as rain. I would like to see that. We have seen the best that men can do for God. Wouldn't it be marvelous to see what God can do for men if they are willing to follow on to know the Lord.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Wednesday Evening, March 20, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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