

Sunday, May 15, 2022 am

CLOSER TO GOD (16)

Understanding True Repentance

As we continue our theme for this year, “Closer to God”, I want to address another important subject. We just concluded an extensive study of God’s grace. One of the points we briefly mentioned in this study was our need for repentance. And we have also made mention of it in other aspects of this theme. If we are to truly appreciate the greatness of God’s grace and our response to it, we need to understand repentance. So today, I want to address this subject in greater detail.

I. What is repentance?

- a. Repentance is a subject that is often misunderstood and misapplied. It is also a subject that is avoided by many because of its demands. But, as always, that does not preclude the need to understand and apply this subject when needed.
- b. Defined – lit. the Greek word, μετανοέω (metanoēō) means:
 - i. “to perceive afterwards” (Bullinger, Vine’s). The idea is a realization that what one has done was wrong and thus there is a need to make a change.
 - ii. Another source defines the word as, “to change one’s mind” (BDAG, Thayer).
 - iii. Still another source, “turn around, change one’s mind”, also “change of direction” (EDNT).
 - iv. In all of these we see what is involved with repentance – it begins with a realization of error which leads to a change of mind about what one has done which ultimately leads to a change of direction in one’s life. The result is change – change in action and one’s life.
 - v. Illustrated: Matthew 21:28-32 – the one son repented and went.
- c. It is a deep change of heart that leads to a change of one’s actions AND life.
- d. Consider 2 Corinthians 7:9-11 – this describes true repentance. Notice the change and the efforts put forth to ensure that change was as complete as it could be.

II. Some thoughts about repentance

- a. God’s grace leads to repentance. When we fully appreciate God’s grace and realize what we have done, it leads to the necessary change in our life. Romans 2:4 – His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering leads to repentance.
- b. This is something Christians need to understand.
 - i. Last year, I presented a lesson on repentance, but it was directed more toward becoming a Christian. We must never forget that AS a Christian, understanding repentance is equally important. Consider the strong warning of the one who returns to the world and is living in a state of refusal to repent.
 - ii. It is part of restoration to Him – Acts 8:22, cf. 2 Corinthians 7:9-11.
 - iii. 5 of the 7 churches of Asia in Revelation 2 & 3 were told to repent (Revelation 2:5 – Ephesus; Revelation 2:16 – Pergamos; Revelation 2:21-22 – Thyatira; Revelation 3:3 – Sardis; Revelation 3:19 – Laodicea). The other 2 had nothing condemned that is mentioned.
 - iv. As we consider repentance, let us realize that this is NOT a suggestion, but something absolutely necessary for restoration. If you have sin in your life, you NEED to repent – consider the 1 John passages last week.
- c. Repentance needs to be deliberate – by this we mean it is something you understand that you are doing, and it is intentional. It is this deliberate reality that will cause you to take steps to put obstacles between you and sin, especially the sins you struggle with.
- d. Repenting of “past sins” – note that repentance needs to be universal.
 - i. If we are to genuinely repent it is going to be for sin in general (whatever sins we are guilty of). It may involve specific sins, but the idea is renouncing sin all together. This goes back to

1 John 3:6-9 – a realization that you cannot sin. As a Christian you do not sin (persistently live in sin).

- ii. It needs to be “far-sweeping” (Joe Price)
- iii. Either you repent or you don’t – there is no middle ground!
- iv. Thought: Can you “half-way” change your mind? If you are “leaning toward” something, you are not there yet.

III. What does true repentance involve? Psalm 51

- a. In our recent studies, we have addressed the sin of David. Recall how his lust led to committing adultery, a coverup and even the killing of her husband. (2 Samuel 11). David is confronted and exposed by Nathan the prophet (2 Samuel 12). We find in David an example of genuine repentance. There are a few psalms that relate to his repentance, but Psalm 51 stands out. As we consider what true repentance involves, let us examine this psalm. Notice that David HAS repented as he writes this.
- b. Psalm 51 and repentance.
 - i. Vs. 1 – *Have mercy upon me, O God* – in taking care of our sins, we MUST turn to God – 1 John 1:9. We need His mercy and compassion to be forgiven – cf. Ephesians 2:4, Titus 3:4-5, 1 Peter 1:3, etc.
 - ii. Vs. 1b-2 – *...Wash me thoroughly... Blot out my transgressions* - there is a desire for complete restoration with God. A realization of His grace, love and mercy. An understanding that sins need to be blotted out – totally removed. This is the ONLY way we can have hope of being in His presence (cf. Hebrews 8:12 – *their sins... I will remember no more*)
 - iii. Vs. 3 – *For I acknowledge my transgression, my sin is always before me* – David did not hide from his sins. He was guilty and needed restoration. There were consequences associated with his sins and he had to live with that (do not confuse living with realization of your past and letting that consume and paralyze you).
 - 1. Remember Paul – 1 Timothy 2:12-15, 1 Corinthians 15:8-10. LEARN from your past!
 - 2. Confession is clearly a part of repentance – 1 John 1:9, cf. James 5:16 – confess your trespasses to one another...
 - 3. Proverbs 28:13, *He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*
 - iv. Vs. 4 – *Against You, You only, have I sinned...* - here is the realization that when we sin, it is first and foremost against God. It might involve others and ourselves – but as far as sin is concerned, it is against God – cf. Isaiah 59:2 – *Your iniquities have separated you from your God...*
 - v. Vs. 5 – *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity...* -
 - 1. This text is sometimes used to justify “original sin”. Time will not permit an examination of that, but suffice it to say that scripture teaches the only sin I am guilty of the ones I commit – Ezekiel 18:4, 20, 2 Corinthians 5:10, etc.
 - 2. David’s point is a realization of how sinful he is – this is likely exaggeration of his unworthiness (cf. Paul – 1 Timothy 1:15 – “of whom I am chief.” The psalms are Hebrew poetry which often involved hyperbole (exaggeration) – e.g. Psalm 22:6, “*I am a worm*” – this is not literal, but an exaggeration that can give better understanding of one’s condition.
 - 3. NOTE: David is NOT seeking to excuse his sin or guilt (which would be implied if this about total depravity – if true, David could pass the blame for his failings, like Eve and Adam did).
 - 4. TRUE repentance is not going to happen UNTIL we realize how bad sin really is, and how bad MY sin is. Again, this is the “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3).
 - vi. Vs. 6 – *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts...* -

1. In this we are reminded that true repentance starts in the heart.
 2. This dismisses the one who just says, "I'm sorry" or regrets getting caught, etc. It dismisses one going through an external formula and thinking such is all that is necessary. Repentance and the Christian life has to be real.
 3. Consider Joel 2:12-13, "*Now, therefore,*" says the Lord, "*Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.*" So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.
 4. Condemning Judah's immorality, Jeremiah noted, *And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense," says the Lord.* (Jeremiah 3:10). Notice that God is not impressed.
 5. Consider godly sorrow leading to repentance – 2 Corinthians 7:10
- vii. Vs. 7-9 – *Purge me with hyssop...* -
1. This is the desire to be forgiven and relationship with God restored. This is a desire for TOTAL forgiveness.
 2. Hyssop was involved in cleansing ceremonies according to God's commands – Leviticus 14:52, Numbers 19:19, etc. Used only in Hebrews 9:19 in NT where it is associated with Moses cleansing the people and "the book" (i.e. the LOM).
 3. Thus the point is a willingness to do what needed to be done to be forgiven.
- viii. Vs. 10 – *Create in me a clean heart* – Here is the desire to completely purge yourself of sin.
1. The *steadfast spirit* is the determination to do and be right as you move forward.
 2. To develop an attitude where one will say, "No more! I am done with that."
 3. I am here again reminded of 2 Corinthians 7:11 – with the clearing of themselves. This is also asking for God's help in overcoming struggles.
- ix. Vs. 11 – *Do not cast me away from Your presence* – We have here again, the desire to be in God's presence and that He remove ANYTHING that stands in that way. In this expression I see godly fear – a realization that one can forfeit his salvation (Galatians 5:4, 2 Peter 2:20-22). Similarly, *removing His Holy Spirit* was being removed from His presence.
- a. Vs. 12 – *Restore to me the joy of Your salvation...* - this is the desire to feel saved and pleasing to God.
- a. The gratitude one ought to have knowing their sins are forgiven.
 - b. We have addressed concerns with doubts that one has – especially forgiving oneself, knowing your own struggles and unworthiness. We need assurance that we are acceptable to Him. That is where true joy will be found.
 - c. BUT it can only be found if you genuinely repent and you KNOW you are striving to walk in the light (1 John 1:7).
 - d. Note that when one repents there is rejoicing in heaven – Luke 15:7, 10, 22-24. There ought to be rejoicing in our lives and for others who have expressed their repentance. Acts 3:19 – the "times of refreshing may come"
- x. Vs. 13-15 – *Then I will teach transgressors...* - when we are right with God, we can share His word with others. Furthermore, genuine repentance will be evident. It involves real change.
- xi. Vs. 16-17 – *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit* – when we genuinely repent, we are going to consider what God wants. A consistent thread throughout scripture – God wants the heart to be right. IT HAS to be so if one is to be forgiven. While exact obedience is needed, NEVER forget that it starts with the heart.
- xii. Vs. 18-19 – *Do good in your good pleasure to Zion...* - finally, David submits his request to God, knowing that WHEN we have done our part, God will do His part and be pleased. God will ACCEPT our sacrifices to Him. This is our goal in repentance – to be reconciled to God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20)

Conclusion: Why should I repent? If you desire to draw closer to God, it is a must. Psalm 15 speaks of those who may abide in His tabernacle (presence). Also, consider Acts 17:31, 2 Cor. 5:10 – there is a day of judgment coming. Are we ready for that day?