

Repentance Brings Refreshment

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Acts 3:17-26

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I have a white board up here today. Could you shout out the names of various sins you struggle with? If it's easier to think of the sins of others, you can share theirs.

Last weekend we focused on the first half of Peter's second sermon in the Book of Acts and were challenged to *look at every situation as a gospel opportunity*. After the lame man began leaping, Peter started preaching while calling the people to account for killing Christ.

Listen now to the second half of his sermon from Acts 3:17-26: “*And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.*”

Here's what I'm hoping we get today: *We must practice continual repentance as we call others to do the same.* I see three requirements and three results in this passage.

Requirements

1. Reflect on what you did. Look at verse 17: “*And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.*” Note how Peter changes his tone by identifying himself with them by calling them “*brothers*.” Then He

acknowledges they didn't really know what they were doing when they crucified Christ. He's following the model set by Jesus when He prayed in Luke 23:34:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Later in 1 Corinthians 2:8, Paul says, "**None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**"

2. Recognize what God has done. Next Peter takes his listeners to fulfilled prophecy in verse 18: "**But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.**" Drop down to verse 21: "**Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you'**" and verse 24: "**And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.**"

John 6:14 identifies Jesus as the prophet proclaimed by Moses: "**When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, 'This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!'**" Here we see the coming of Christ and His crucifixion was foretold by "**all**" the prophets and everything was fulfilled with pinpoint precision. The word "**fulfilled**" means to "**make full.**" God's promises and prophecies have come to full and final fruition in Christ. Jesus said it like this in Luke 24:27: "**And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.**"

It's amazing to realize there are over 300 clear prophecies about the birth, life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ that have been fulfilled. For the sake of time, I'll share just a few:

- Psalm 22:1: "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" Some 900 years later, Jesus uttered these exact words from the cross in Matthew 27:46: "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**"
- Psalm 22:7: "**All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads.**" This was fulfilled when the masses mocked the Messiah according to Matthew 27:39: "**And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads.**"
- Isaiah 50:6: "**I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.**" This was fulfilled 700 years later in Mark 14:65: "**And some began to spit**

on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophesy!’ And the guards received him with blows.’

3. Repent of what you’ve done. Check out verse 19: “***Repent therefore, and turn back...***” The word “***therefore***” is a conclusion - after reflecting on what you did and recognizing all that God has done, it’s essential to repent of what you’ve done. They may have acted in ignorance but they were still guilty for their iniquity and therefore must turn from their sins and turn back to God. Ignorance is not an excuse as Peter now moves from *indictment* to *invitation*. The word “***repent***” literally means “*after mind,*” or changing one’s mind.

Tim Challies suggests a few principles that will help us repent of sin.

- **No sin is too small to confess.** According to Galatians 3:10, there are no petty peccadilloes: “***For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’***” Every sin equally demands nothing less than the blood of Jesus Christ if there is to be reconciliation. We need to resolve to be quick to confess and repent from every sin, big or little.
- **No sin is too great to repent from.** We may repent of sin in confidence, knowing our sin has not driven an immovable wedge between God and ourselves. Listen to the promise of Titus 2:14: “***Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.***”
- **We need to repent of sin specifically, not just generally.** While we can’t remember every sin we commit, it is not enough to just vaguely acknowledge we are sinners. Let’s ask God to search our hearts and confess specific sins as we repent from each individual one. Proverbs 28:13: “***Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.***”

Repentance gets a bad wrap in our culture and in the church but we must come back to its central importance. John the Baptist’s message was one of repentance according to Matthew 3:2: “***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.***” The first sermon of Jesus contained a command to repent in Mark 1:15: “***The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.***”

John adds in Matthew 3:8 that repentance must affect our behavior: “***Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.***” We also see this in Acts 26:20: “***...they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.***”

That reminds me of Jack the painter who would often thin his paint to make it go further. When a church decided to hire a painter, Jack gave the lowest bid so he got the job. Before getting up on some scaffolding, he thinned his paint way down with turpentine. When the job was almost finished, the skies turned dark and a tremendous downpour gushed from the heavens, washing off the thinned paint and knocking Jack to the ground. He quickly got to his knees and began crying out, “*Oh, God! Forgive me! What should I do?*” Just then in a voice louder than thunder he heard these words, “*REPAINT! REPAINT! AND THIN NO MORE!*”

To “***turn back***” is translated as “*be converted*” in the KJV. It literally means, “*to twist, to turn about and around.*” To “***repent***” and “***turn back***” are commands in the aorist imperative, which conveys the sense of “*Do it today! Do not delay!*”

Steven Cole defines repentance as “*a change of mind that results in a change of one’s entire life.*” Spurgeon says, “*Repentance is to leave the sins we loved before...by doing so no more.*” Or as one little girl in Sunday School put it, “*Repentance means feeling sorry enough to quit!*”

At its core, repentance is a change of mind, which leads to a change of heart resulting in a change in actions. Or, we could say it like this: repentance is a change of *attitude* and *affections*, which results in *action*.

Repentance is more than a one-time action – it’s an ongoing activity. I’m trying to live with a posture of repentance so I’m more ready to repent than I have been in the past. In his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer urges us to practice daily renunciation and repentance of sin. I try to keep his words in mind: “*Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.*”

I don't know about you, but the greatest threat to true repentance for me is my tendency to trust in myself. The other struggle I have is I'm often oblivious to my sins, especially the ones that aren't so obvious.

Repentance is a spiritually enabled supernatural act of God, not something we can muster on our own. This is made clear in verse 26: "...*by turning every one of you from your wickedness.*" Romans 2:4 says, "...*God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.*"

We must practice continual repentance as we call others to do the same.

Results

Peter's preaching not only gives us requirements but also three results, which come from obedience.

1. Release from sins. The first result is found in the second half of verse 19: "...*that your sins may be blotted out.*" The word "*that*" can be translated "*so that*," indicating what happens when we repent and return. These are such gracious words offered to those who murdered the Messiah.

The phrase "*blotted out*" is the idea of sins being wiped away, erased and expunged from the record of our wrongdoing. David prayed for this in Psalm 51:1 after committing murder and adultery: "*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.*" If you struggle to believe God has erased your sins, you might want to memorize Isaiah 43:25: "*I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*"

Joel 2:12-13 brings this all together: "*'Yet even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.' Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and He relents over disaster."*

This makes me think of these words:

*What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus*

*What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus
O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow
No other fount I know.
Nothing but the blood of Jesus*

2. Refreshment from the Spirit. We see this in verse 20: “***That times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...***” The idea behind “refreshing” is “cooling, relief and rest from difficult, distressful or burdensome circumstances.” This term is used in the Old Testament to speak of the Exodus experience. It also refers to the outpouring of the Spirit before the second coming of Christ when Israel as a nation will turn to Christ. One commentator puts it precisely: “*No repentance, no refreshing.*” This makes me think of Isaiah 30:15: “***In returning and rest you shall be saved.***”

It’s the Lord alone who brings refreshment. The “***presence of the Lord***” literally means, “*toward the face of the Lord*” and implies intimacy and closeness. Some of you are searching for satisfaction in people, pleasure or your possessions. You’ll never find refreshing rest apart from a relationship with the Redeemer. Meditate on Matthew 11:28: “***Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.***” Whenever a sinner repents and the gospel is received, refreshing follows.

3. Restoration of sinners. After release and refreshment, God loves to restore sinners. Look at verse 21: “***...whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things.***” I was talking with someone this week about all the difficulties she has been through. She said she feels like her entire year was lost. The Lord brought Joel 2:25 to mind so I shared it with her and it gave her hope: “***I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.***”

We must practice continual repentance as we call others to do the same.

Conclusion

It’s easy to think repentance is something only lost people must do in order to be saved. Actually, repentance is also a call to Christians who have drifted into disobedience or sinful selfishness.

A few weeks ago I met with an Edgewood member who needed to confess some secret sins [BTW, I have his permission to share this]. When I saw him a couple days ago, his eyes were bright and he had a huge smile on his face. He shared about the joy he has now since he repented. I asked him to write down what he's been learning so I could share it.

"When we're in a state of sin regardless of what it is, we tend to harbor that sin. It then becomes a burden in our heart. When we finally realize that sin is affecting our very being and has become a roadblock in our relationship with God we need to repent. Repenting is sometimes not easy to do...but once we do out of full sincerity God forgives us...relief comes over our souls, our eyes are opened. Repentance is so hard to do [but it] suddenly fills your heart with utter joy. What a privilege we have through Christ to be able to just admit and immediately have our baggage and burdens relieved. Repentance is not at all negative, it is joy...what a wonderful feeling that is to have all that weight immediately removed!"

It's not unusual to find yourself rejoicing after repenting, even though the process of repentance is often repugnant to us. Gavin Ortlund writes,

*Thus in repentance, we must fully acknowledge the weight of our sin; we must own the staggering cost that held Christ on that cross; we must face squarely, without excuse or evasion, the depths of our guilt before a holy God. There is also joy in repentance. In repentance, we pray like David in Psalm 51:8, 12: "**Let the bones you have crushed rejoice...restore to me the joy of your salvation.**"*

It can seem strange that repentance can produce both grief and joy — that David's bones can be "crushed" and yet "rejoice." But this is consistent with the flavor of the gospel, which achieves life through death, joy through suffering, good through evil.

Catherine Parks, Pastor Kyle's sister-in-law, wrote an article called, "Why Repentance is Really About Joy." Here's part of what she said:

*True repentance is not a joyless, wallowing-in-sorrow repentance. It's a process that starts with grief and guilt, and ends with forgiveness and deep joy. In his book *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Puritan pastor and writer Thomas Watson wrote, "Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet."*

If we come to God with a heart broken by our sin, He “will not despise it” (Psalm 51:17); He will accept it, and accept us, because of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf. In Christ, we’re assured of forgiveness. So we don’t need to deny, cover, or make excuses for our sin—we need to take it to the cross and experience the joy of repentance.

Is there anything you need to repent of today? If so, don’t delay. Is there a secret sin you need to bring out in the open? Have you been coasting as a Christian? Is bitterness putting down such deep roots in your life that it is defiling those closest to you? It’s time to own it, confess it, and turn from it so you can return to your first love.

A well-known Christian had his sins exposed this week and came clean in a long post. Here’s part of what he said, *“My entire career has been lived out on stage, and even though I’ve shared many of my life struggles with my audiences, I’ve lived in constant fear of the darkest parts of my life being exposed publicly...I’m ashamed of my behavior and I’m so sorry for hurting so many people. I don’t blame anyone but myself. I’m responsible for my actions and I’ve repented and am taking full ownership.”*

Let’s take some time right now to confess and repent from anything the Spirit brings to mind.

If you’re not yet a follower of Christ, I want us to circle back to verse 22. In speaking of Jesus, we’re given a command: **“You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.”** We must hear *and* heed. Verse 23 tells us what will happen if we don’t: **“And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.”** You have a choice. You can refuse to listen and be destroyed or you can lean on Jesus and be delivered. It’s time to reflect on what you’ve done, recognize what God has done and repent of what you’ve done so you can experience release from your sins, refreshment from the Spirit and restoration.

Verse 19 says: **“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.”** To blot out literally means, “to completely wipe off and obliterate any evidence of wrongdoing.” Ancient documents were written on papyrus or vellum, a substance made from the skins of animals. Both were expensive and could not be wasted. Ancient ink had no acid in it, so scribes would often erase what was written to write something new.

I like how Spurgeon puts it: “*My revolts, my excesses, are all recorded against me; but, Lord, erase the lines. Draw Thy pen through the register. Obliterate the record, though now it seems engraven in the rock forever; many strokes of Thy mercy may be needed, to out the deep inscription, but then Thou has a multitude of mercies, and therefore I beseech thee, erase my sins.*”

Are you ready to repent and receive so you can be released from the record of your sins? Only then will you find the refreshment you are searching for and experience the restoration God alone can bring to your life.

Lord, I admit I am a sinner and deserve Your just judgment. I repent from trying to follow my own way and now turn to You as the only way. I believe Jesus died in my place on the cross and rose again on the third day and now I receive Him into my life. Please save me from my sins and from Your righteous wrath. I want to be born again so I place all my trust in You and You alone. If there's anything in my life You don't like, please get rid of it. I pray this in the name of Jesus, the One who is both Lord and Christ. Amen.

→ Erase sins from white board...

I've been humbled by how God is growing our church family as people are repenting and receiving Christ as Lord and Savior. Our services have grown, even while we've been gathering here in the Life Center (gym) for the past 11 months. Our Saturday night and 10:45 services have seen the most growth, with this past weekend's 10:45 service completely full. I've never seen so many teenagers, young adults and young families. BTW, just since January we've had **196** first-time guests who filled out Connection Cards!

Props to Pastor Kyle for the tremendous work he is doing with youth and young adults. The timing will be good for us to move into the worship center because we will have more seats. Having said that, I'm much more excited about our *sending* capacity than I am our *seating* capacity. That's why we'll continue to focus on living on mission in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth as we mobilize with the gospel in our community, in our counties, to our country and across the continents.

Today we want to spotlight another of our Go Team partners, Safe Families for Children. Jessica Trowbridge, a member of Edgewood, is the Director of this ministry.

Safe Families Interview

- 1. Can you tell us about Safe Families?**
- 2. Please share a story about how God used a couple to bring hope and healing to a young girl.**
- 3. What are some ways someone could get involved in Safe Families?**

Next weekend is Dedication Weekend! Just a reminder moving forward our new service times will be Saturday at 5 and Sundays at 9 and 10:45. We thought it would be helpful to provide a brief orientation to help you get ready.

Play Facility Orientation Video