

**June 14, 2020**

## **Finding Courage to Repent**

### **Sermon Summary**

This message looks at the topic of repentance! The divided kingdom of Israel and Judah had been involved in terrible wickedness and had broken their covenant with God. The Northern Kingdom's wickedness led God to withdraw His presence from them and they were defeated by the Assyrians and many of the people carried into exile. The Southern Kingdom was filled with wickedness, but their judgement was postponed because of the efforts of King Hezekiah and his great grandson, King Josiah, who both sought to bring about national repentance. The two kings in between continued in wickedness. The ministry of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, began under Josiah's reign. A detailed look at the need for repentance and the requirements for finding courage to repent are both presented because of the practical application to our lives today!

### **Full Sermon Notes**

"To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus for my life is wholly bound to His!" Without the work Jesus did while He was here on this earth and the sacrifice He gave on the Cross, we would be without hope! This year we were led of the Lord to have a theme of revival! In others words, we believe God wants to send revival to our church and to our community, but there are some prerequisites for revival. For one thing, we must desire it and pray for it! But there is another very important factor to revival we must not exclude, for if we do, then revival will not come! Let's pray and ask God to teach us about this critical aspect of revival! PRAY!

What is the very important factor for revival I speak of? Repentance! What does repentance mean? Let's look in the dictionary! Hey kids, I'm so glad you're here with us this morning. How many of you have ever looked up a word in the dictionary? When you look up the word repentance in the dictionary this is what you find...

"Repentance is the act of repenting!"

Don't you just love it when you look up the meaning of a word and the definition is another form of the same word, so you have to look it up again! So what does it mean to repent? Well it depends on who you ask. Newer online dictionaries say it is...

"To feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one's wrongdoing or sin."

In other words, modern dictionaries say repentance is feeling sorry about what you've done. That's a part of repentance, but not all of it! I've heard that words don't have meaning, they have usage. So some folks would say it's okay to change the definition of a word based on its usage rather than its accepted base meaning. However, if we always take this approach then our foundation for understanding truth and meaning will be in a constant state of flux and change.

Let's look at an older definition of the word repent and see what it says. Let's look at Webster's definition, from back around 1828. Wow, that's almost 200 years ago. He says repentance is...

1. to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life
2. **A.** to feel regret or contrition  
**B.** to change one's mind

Webster includes "to feel sorry" about having done wrong, but he begins with "to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to changing!" So repentance means turning from one path and pursuing a new path! It's one thing to feel bad about doing wrong, but it's quite another thing to do something about it! Paul describes true repentance in 2 Corinthians 7:10-11a

2 Cor 7:10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

2 Cor 7:11a See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done...

Why does worldly sorrow bring death? Because it does not include turning away from sin. It just includes saying I'm sorry, but doing nothing about it, and changing nothing! True repentance involves change. Jesus said this about repentance...

Luke 13:3 ...But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

So now that we have a pretty good understanding of the true meaning and importance of repentance, let's look at the Hebrew people and see why there was such a desperate...

### **Need for Repentance**

Israel, the Northern Kingdom had continued to rebel against the Lord and to break their covenant, and as we will see, Judah was in a bad way as well. This was not a simple, minor breach of the covenant they had made with God, this was a total abandonment of all things God! They had embraced the full wickedness of the surrounding cultures. I'm going to read to you a pretty good portion of Chapter 17, because it sets up the need for repentance among the Hebrew people. Hoshea had become King of Israel in Samaria and reigned for nine years. He did evil in the sight of God and the people did unspeakable evil. It was so bad that God decided to let them be captured and deported by Assyrians. A couple of things about this: First of all we must remember God had just cause to allow this to happen because the people had made a covenant agreement with God and they decided to egregiously break that covenant! Secondly, we must understand that many times God simply removes His presence from the wickedness of the people! The result of losing God's hand of blessing and protection is catastrophic! Many times God doesn't have to do anything except remove His blessing, and we find ourselves in a predicament! In fact in the passage we are about to read we see the Hebrew people breaking their covenant with God, breaking numerous of the Ten Commandments, and God having to remove the people from His presence. I'm going to read these verses but a part of one of them

I'm going to let you read so I don't have to say it out loud because of little ears. Listen to 2 Kings 17:7-23...

2 Ki 17:7 All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods

2 Ki 17:8 and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced.

2 Ki 17:9 The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns.

2 Ki 17:10 They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree.

2 Ki 17:11 At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the LORD to anger.

2 Ki 17:12 They worshiped idols, though the LORD had said, "You shall not do this."

2 Ki 17:13 The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets."

2 Ki 17:14 But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the LORD their God.

2 Ki 17:15 They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, "Do not do as they do," and they did the things the LORD had forbidden them to do.

2 Ki 17:16 They forsook all the commands of the LORD their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal.

\*\*\*2 Ki 17:17 They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

2 Ki 17:18 So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left,

2 Ki 17:19 and even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced.

2 Ki 17:20 Therefore the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence.

2 Ki 17:21 When he tore Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat their king. Jeroboam enticed Israel away from following the LORD and caused them to commit a great sin.

2 Ki 17:22 The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them

2 Ki 17:23 until the LORD removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.

When I read that I just scratch my head and wonder how the people could have fallen so far away from God? How could they have allowed themselves to get so deep into wickedness they would do some of the detestable things they were doing. Well, let me just say this, it all starts out with little compromises that grow and grow. Give the devil an inch and he'll take a mile. Do you remember David's son Solomon? We talked about him a few weeks ago. He reigned as King before the kingdom was divided. He had built the temple for the Lord in Jerusalem and the day the temple was dedicated was spectacular. However, even though Solomon had asked for wisdom and God gave it to him, Solomon let his lust lead him to take on pagan wives and he allowed them to worship their own gods and eventually, the Bible tells us, Solomon, in his old age, began worshipping those same pagan gods. Solomon's bad example led the people into terrible sin! We talked about that several weeks ago. It's almost like Solomon knew that was going to happen very early on in his kingship. Listen to what he prayed back when the temple was dedicated. He was speaking of the people of Israel when he prayed this...

1 Ki 8:46 "When they sin against you--for there is no one who does not sin--and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to his own land, far away or near;

1 Ki 8:47 and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their conquerors and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly';

1 Ki 8:48 and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name;

1 Ki 8:49 then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.

1 Ki 8:50 And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy;

1 Ki 8:51 for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace.

Now that was a wonderful prayer, and I can't judge Solomon's heart, but wow, it's like he knew the sins he was committing and the effect it would have on the nation. Sometimes people are so bent on doing their sin, even though they know it's going to cause great grief, pain, suffering and hurt to those they love, they just insist and persist in evil. It's like the devil has a fish hook in their mouth and is reeling them in to do his evil wishes. Now you might ask, "is there any hope of overcoming the power of sin and having the ability to truly repent?" We fast forward from Solomon's prayer and the people of the Northern Kingdom had indeed been taken captive by an enemy nation. Was Israel's and Judah's situation hopeless? Not if someone would lead the people in...

### **Finding Courage to Repent**

God was going to use three people very powerfully to help them find that hope. King Hezekiah, King Josiah, and the prophet Jeremiah. Each of these men found courage to speak about repentance and to actually take actions of repentance! They each tried really hard to get the people to repent of their sins. First at bat would be King Hezekiah who sought to lead the people of the Southern Kingdom Judah to turn back to God and away from their pagan idol worship and detestable practices. Listen to this description of Hezekiah and what he did..

2 Ki 18:3 He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done.

2 Ki 18:4 He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)

2 Ki 18:5 Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.

2 Ki 18:6 He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses.

However, Hezekiah wasn't perfect, and towards the end of his reign had some pride issues that hampered his success! Once again, give the devil an inch and he'll take a mile! Hezekiah's son and grandson would go on to be very evil kings. It would not be until his great grandson, Josiah, that things would turn around. Hey kids, check this out...

2 Ki 22:1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years...

How about that? Eight years old and already King! When he was only 18 years old he led the people to begin a restoration project for the temple of the Lord! Once the project started, they made a discovery! Can you imagine what they discovered? What I'm about to tell you should give you a real insight into why the people had drifted so far into wickedness.

2 Ki 22:8 Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD." He gave it to Shaphan, who read it.

2 Ki 22:9 Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: "Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the LORD and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the temple."

2 Ki 22:10 Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

2 Ki 22:11 When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes.

2 Ki 22:12 He gave these orders to Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant:

2 Ki 22:13 "Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord's anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us."

Wow!! The Word of God, the Book of The Law, Genesis to Deuteronomy, had been so neglected it had been lost in the temple! They were going to church, but the truth of God no longer had a place in their worship services. No wonder the nation had fallen into such sin and detestable practices! We may be quick to point fingers at the Hebrew people, but how many times have you gotten ready to go to church or Bible study and couldn't find your Bible because the last time you saw it was last week at church! Could it be that the Word of God is not a part of your daily life? When King Josiah heard the Word of The Lord he had a spirit of repentance. He tore his robes in sorrow and then immediately took action to make changes! So powerful! King Josiah led the nation in great spiritual reforms. He encouraged the people to repent of their wickedness. It was during Josiah's reign that Jeremiah became a prophet and was known as the weeping prophet because of his heartbroken cries for the people to repent! In fact it was Jerimiah who said this to the people...

Jer 2:11 Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols.

Jer 2:12 Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD.

Jer 2:13 "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

And speaking of their Idol worship, Jeremiah said this...

Jer 2:27 They say to wood, 'You are my father,' and to stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, 'Come and save us!'

Jer 2:28 Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah.

Jer 2:29 "Why do you bring charges against me? You have all rebelled against me," declares the LORD.

I don't know if you caught this or not, but Jeremiah calls out their foolishness of exchanging the Glory of God for idols who are but wood and stone and then chastises them for calling on God when their idols can't get them out of their trouble. He said they had forsaken the spring of living water to dig their own cisterns, and broken ones at that, which could hold no water! And to top it all off, when things went bad they brought charges against God and blamed Him! And when things got unbearable the people would pray very eloquent and seemingly sincere prayers, but there was a problem. They were unwilling to repent! God told Jeremiah to say this to the people...

Jer 3:4 Have you not just called to me: 'My Father, my friend from my youth,

Jer 3:5 will you always be angry? Will your wrath continue forever?' This is how you talk, but you do all the evil you can."

The people simply didn't understand or refused to accept...

### **The Requirements for Finding Courage to Repent**

What I'm about to share with you is not only practical, but absolutely necessary and critical if we are to have revival in our own lives, families, church, community and nation! From today's text, I want to give you the requirements for finding the courage to repent!

#### *Finding Courage to Repent Requires Transparency*

2 Ki 17:9 The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right... Folks you can't hide things from God, but as long as you insist on trying to hide your sin from God and others, then there can be no repentance, no change, no victory! The Psalmist said...

Psa 32:5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

#### *Finding Courage to Repent Requires Humility*

2 Ki 17:14 But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the LORD their God.

Admitting your wrong is not easy, but is absolutely necessary! James puts it this way...

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

#### *Finding Courage to Repent Requires Acknowledgement of Sin*

Jer 2:17 Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the LORD your God when he led you in the way?

Jer 2:19 Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God and have no awe of me," declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.

We need to acknowledge how foolish our sin is, how wicked it is, how hurtful it is, how selfish it is, and how deceitful it is! It may be fun but it's not fulfilling and never satisfies. Sin always wants more, and in the process always takes more! More of your soul, your heart, your mind, your life! The Psalmist said...

Psa 51:3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

Psa 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

### *Finding Courage to Repent Requires Sorrow Over Sin*

Jer 3:21 A cry is heard on the barren heights, the weeping and pleading of the people of Israel, because they have perverted their ways and have forgotten the LORD their God.

Jer 3:22 "Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding." "Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD our God.

If our tears are tears of true repentance, God says He will cure us of our backsliding! If we are only sorry we got caught, then we will not stop our sinning, we will just try to find better ways to hide our sinning! That is not true repentance. Remember the verse we read earlier...

2 Cor 7:10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

### *Finding Courage to Repent Requires Willingness to Change*

2 Ki 17:13 The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets."

True repentance leads to change. It doesn't mean that you will become perfect over night or that you won't have to grow in your relationship with Jesus, or that you won't struggle with overcoming old habits, but it does mean that you have given Jesus permission to help you live a new life. I love what Peter said to the Jewish leadership when they were being questioned about healing the crippled beggar...

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

Acts 3:20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus.

### *Finding Courage to Repent Requires Acceptance of Forgiveness*

Jer 3:12 Go, proclaim this message toward the north: "'Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD, 'I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful,' declares the LORD, 'I will not be angry forever.

Jer 3:13 Only acknowledge your guilt-- you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me," declares the LORD.

Jer 3:14 "Return, faithless people," declares the LORD, "for I am your husband. I will choose you--

Did you hear that? If you are willing to turn from your unfaithfulness, your sin, God will be merciful and will choose you! That is powerful and beautiful! John put it this way...

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Let's pray!