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Sermon Notes

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Job's Repentance and Ours

Job 42:1-6

The central call of Almighty God to the sinful human race is this:
Repent and believe the gospel!

It is how Jesus Christ, the Son of God began his preaching ministry:

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

The "Kingdom of God" is a spiritual reality in which we human beings delight in the God as our King and gladly submit to his will at all times. God's throne is at the epicenter of the entire universe. When the Apostle John was lifted up from the surface of the earth, from the Island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor, when the Spirit lifted him up and brought him through a doorway into the heavenly realms, the first thing he saw was a glorious throne with Someone seated on it.

That throne is the central reality of heaven – everything is in concentric circles around it. It is the throne of Almighty God. And we human beings have been in rebellion against that throne. We have sinned against that throne. We have defied that throne.

The stunning good news – the gospel – that Christ Jesus came to preach is that the One enthroned before 100 million angels, whose holy law we have broken, has sent his Son to die the death our rebellion deserves and to raise us up to a new and eternal life. Essential to our salvation is that we repent. So much

of scripture is designed to work in us sinners the REPENTANCE we need, we must have, in order to be saved, to enter the Kingdom of God.

In Job 42:1-6, we have a stunning and timeless display of repentance by this great man, Job. It is the end of a very long process that the mighty, wise, and loving God has been working in him. And in the passage today, that work is complete – Job has deeply repented of his sins.

The basic idea of this sermon is a “how much more” argument... If a godly man like Job needed to repent, how much more do you... and do I... need to repent?!

So our study today is to understand the depth and nature of Job’s repentance as an example to us.

I. The History of Repentance

A. Repentance is the Religion of Sinners

1. Perfectly righteous people have no need to repent... they think perfectly, love perfectly, live perfectly
2. But since Adam and Eve fell into sin, no one but Christ has met that description! Christ alone thought perfectly, loved perfectly, lived perfectly
3. As soon as Adam and Eve fell into sin, they dragged the whole human race with them into a deep, dark pit of sin
4. God immediately came and confronted Adam and Eve, and began the journey of redemptive history... a journey of repentance

B. God Confronted Adam and Eve

Genesis 3:8-11 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked;

so I hid." ¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

A few weeks ago, we studied the fact that God is not accountable to us... as Daniel 4 says, "No one can say to him, 'What have you done?'" But God can say it to us in our sin... he comes and confronts us powerfully in our sin, seeking to bring us to repentance:

Genesis 3:13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

This began the sad history of repentance in the human race

C. King David Wrote Two Psalms of Repentance

1. Psalm 32, Psalm 51
2. After his terrible sin with Bathsheba, God sent the prophet Nathan to confront him and bring him to repentance... he told him a story, lured him into stating that the man in story deserved to DIE for what he did... then Nathan the prophet pointed the finger at David and said "YOU are the man!" That is a picture of the convicting work God does to save sinners in every generation... bringing people to realize their corruptions, their sins, their rebellions... and then to humbly repent of all of it
3. So in Psalm 32, David speaks of the agony he was in physically when he refused to repent... his body was in pain, his strength was dried up,

David had hardened his heart and refused to deal with his sin... he stayed silent and God pressed hard on him – body and soul

Psalm 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.

4. In Psalm 51, David makes the most important assertion about repentance...

Psalm 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.

True repentance is God-centered, God-focused. It realizes that ultimately all that matters is the glory of God, the holiness of God, the sight of God. God alone created us... God alone sustains us, to God alone we will give account on the Day of Judgment... in God alone do we live and move and have our being.

So genuine repentance is intensely God-centered.

D. The Prophets Worked to Bring God's People to Repentance

1. Elijah on Mt. Carmel... the corrupt nation of Israel had been mixing Baal worship with the worship of the true God, forgetting this central command, which God spoke from heaven out of fire on Mt. Sinai

Exodus 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

2. Now God was using the prophet Elijah to bring the people to repentance for their great sin

1 Kings 18:21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

When God answered Elijah's prayer with fire from heaven, their eyes were opened

1 Kings 18:39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD-- he is God! The LORD-- he is God!"

3. So also Isaiah cried out against the great wickedness and sins of the nation of Israel... and he called them to repentance

Isaiah 1:16-18 ... wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, ¹⁷ learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. ¹⁸ "Come now, let us reason together," says

the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Sadly, this clear call to repentance was refused by that sinful nation:

Isaiah 30:15 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.

4. Again and again, throughout Israel's history, the prophets came in God's name to call his sinful people to repentance... sometimes they did, but usually they resisted and rebelled

When John the Baptist came as forerunner to Christ, this same call was the essence of his entire ministry

E. John the Baptist

Mark 1:4-5 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

F. Jesus Christ... and the Ministry of Repentance

This same call of God to a sinful world to repent of their sins was consummated in the ministry of Jesus Christ

As we've said...

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

A woman who was a notorious sinner found in Christ the kindness of God to forgive:

Luke 7:37-38 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸ and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

Jesus taught the indignant Pharisee Simon at whose house they were that someone's love is in proportion to their sense of how great their sins were and how much they've been forgiven:

Luke 7:47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-- for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.

So also the chief tax collector, Zacchaeus, repented of all his thieving ways, robbing his neighbors to line his pockets with money:

Luke 19:8-10 Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Essential to Jesus SEEKING and SAVING the lost was bringing those lost sinners to REPENTANCE. So he was continually eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners to win them to repentance and back to God. When the self-righteous Pharisees were indignant with Jesus eating and drinking with such defiled, polluted sinners, he answered powerfully:

Luke 5:31-32 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Essential to Jesus' saving mission was HEALING... not merely the temporary physical healings he was doing, but the REAL HEALING of the soul – by repentance!

Every single one of Christ's people who will spend eternity radiantly glorious in heaven will be there as those who repented of a lifetime of sin.

II. The Definition of Repentance

A. Simple Definition from the Word

The Greek word “repent” means a change of mind... to think differently or have a new mind.

The basic idea is that all of our sinful actions come first from sinful thoughts.

To repent is to think differently about God, ourselves and our actions.

Others have likened it to a massive U-turn... you were driving one direction; now you do that U-turn and are driving an entirely different direction

Ok... but that can skip or neglect the heart transformation needed

B. The New Heart

1. Genuine repentance involves a transformation to the core of our being... not merely being sorry for a specific sin, or sorry that you got caught or sorry for the inconvenience or pain of the consequences
2. No, genuine repentance is a transformation of the HEART... that inner part of us that thinks, and reasons, and loves, and emotes, and chooses... the HEART
3. So the prophet Ezekiel spoke of a radical heart transplant that only God can do

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

C. Knowing That You Need a New Heart is Essential... But You Can't Do It to Yourself

D. Repentance is a Gift of God...

2 Timothy 2:25-26 in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come

to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Acts 11:18 God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life

God does this by his powerful Holy Spirit, who works deep conviction of sin in us... he shows us clearly that we have sinned, that those sins are serious and deep, and that God is offended by them

Amazingly, it is the KINDNESS of God that leads us to repentance:

Romans 2:4 God's kindness leads you toward repentance

Especially when we see the kindness of Christ in dealing so gently with broken-hearted sinners, we are led to repent

E. Summary

By genuine repentance, a sinner has a SPIRITUAL SIGHT of their sinfulness... a deep sense of it – not just that it is dangerous and will result in judgment, but because it is DISGUSTING in the sight of a holy God... so that, even if we could get away with it entirely, we would still hate it because it is so foul and dirty and disgusting...

This is the GOD-CENTEREDNESS of genuine repentance – the vertical aspect of it, “Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight!”

And genuine repentance has an emotional side to it, so that we grieve over our sins and hate them

All of this results in genuinely turning away from the sin decisively, and bringing forth fruit in keeping with repentance

III. The Elements of Job’s Repentance

A. God’s Deep Work in Job

1. Given how the whole book of Job unfolds, it seems that bringing Job to this level of repentance was God’s loving purpose all along

2. God was doing a stunningly deep, thorough work in Job
3. Job was stunningly godly... a man about whom God was accustomed to boast... even to Satan, the accuser
4. Satan put Job to the test... and so did God, ultimately
 - a. Satan stole from Job all his wealth
 - b. Satan killed all ten of Job's children
 - c. Then Satan afflicted Job with terrible sores
5. Job began well, not cursing God but actually worshiping him
6. But as the trial went on, the evil started to bubble up from deep within him
7. He started to question God's justice... and his kindness

Job 9:16-18 Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing. ¹⁷ He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason. ¹⁸ He would not let me regain my breath but would overwhelm me with misery.

It's almost as if he sees God as a monster... delighting in crushing his children for no reason!

It culminated in him accusing God directly of injustice:

Job 19:7 "Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice.

He thinks he could directly challenge God in a court of law and win:

Job 31:35-37 I sign now my defense-- let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing. ³⁶ Surely I would wear it on my shoulder, I would put it on like a crown. ³⁷ I would give him an account of my every step; like a prince I would approach him.

8. This is the very sin God accuses him of

Job 40:8 "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?"

B. Seven Elements of Job's Repentance

1. Deeper knowledge of God's power

Job 42:2 "I know that you can do all things"

Job knew that God was powerful before all this happened...

But now that God has appeared in a whirlwind and spoken so powerfully to him with his own voice, Job was ready to be taken to an entirely new level of his knowledge of God's awesome power

This is the clearest statement of God's omnipotence in the Bible... "I know that you CAN DO ALL THINGS"

Jesus puts it this way

Mark 9:23 "Everything is possible for him who believes."

Mark 10:27 With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.

Anything that power can do, God can do.

Job learned this from God's words... tracing out his direct activity in creating and sustaining the universe—laying the foundations of the world, controlling the boundaries of the sea, making the mountains rise and the valleys to sink to just where he ordained they should go, controlling all the patterns of the weather—the wind, the rain, the snow, the thunder and lightning, even to the distant stars—the position and movements and laws of the constellations... then the animal world—the ten animals he mentioned that he created and governs—the lions, ravens, wild goats, deer, wild donkeys, wild oxen, ostrich, horse, hawk, and eagle... how they are born, where they live, how they eat, what their habits and capabilities are, when and how they die

It was at this point, as you remember, that Job repented for the first time:

Job 40:3-5 Then Job answered the LORD: ⁴ "I am unworthy-- how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. ⁵ I spoke once, but I have no answer-- twice, but I will say no more."

But God wasn't finished with him... he rebuked him for thinking he could discredit his justice in order to justify himself... he reminded Job effectively, "I'm God and you are NOT!"

Job 40:9-10 Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his? ¹⁰ Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty.

He reminded Job that he, God, alone can judge the wicked and arrogant of the world... and because Job could do none of these things, he could not save himself.

Then God brought forth the last two beasts... Behemoth and Leviathan... beasts whose terrifying power and ferocity make them impossible for man to corral, to control, or to kill

It seemed best as you remember to say these beasts represent not literal beasts (all of which man actually CAN hunt and kill) but demons and Satan himself – that ancient dragon – who is secretly responsible for the pain and suffering and death in this sin-cursed world

God was saying to Job, "You can't control them or kill them... but they are my PLAYTHINGS! I absolutely rule over them for my pleasure... I use them, and when I am done with them, I will kill them."

Job had never realized the extent of God's awesome power before

Now, as essential to his repentance, he does. He KNOWS in ways he never did before, "I know that you, O Lord, can do ALL THINGS"

2. Deeper knowledge of God's wise plan

Job 42:2 "... no plan of yours can be thwarted.

The awesome power of God is controlled at every moment by the wise plans of God

God is not some random terrifying force in the universe that runs amok... like the ultimate loose cannon crashing around unfettered on the heaving deck of a sailing vessel in the midst of a storm... never know where it will go, whom it will crush or destroy

Not at all! God's awesome power is chained forever to his perfectly wise plans

And God's plans will all be executed... no plan of his can be thwarted because he is all-powerful

So, essential to Job's repentance is understanding not only the infinite scope of God's power, but the perfect details of all of God's plans

Job losing all his wealth, and all ten of his children, and his health is all part of God's wise plan... it was not random, not TIME + CHANCE, but purposeful

And what God has planned, that he will do

Essential to repentance (that is, THINKING DIFFERENTLY) is knowing that God is a perfect thinker... and his thoughts are so far beyond ours, we are in no position to question him

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Repentance means turning away from our lowly, carnal thoughts and learning to think like God

"Come now, let us reason together" says the Lord – the God of perfect thinking, perfect plans.

3. Deeper sense of his own ignorance

This obviously follows this last one... God's plans will happen,
because he's thought this all out

Our thinking is juvenile... like that of a child

One writer likened Job and all of us in this book to a 12-year-old
backseat driver, yelling in fear and anger instructions to his wise
father who is an excellent driver

So, part of Job's repentance is accepting God's rebuke for his
ignorance:

***Job 42:3 You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without
knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things
too wonderful for me to know.***

The words "You asked" in the translation I'm using were added by
the translators... they are not in the original

But it is true... Job is quoting back to God what God said to him

Job in his repentance accepts God's convicting levelling of his
thoughts...

Effectively, he was saying back to God, "You are absolutely right! I
was obscuring counsel by speaking words without knowledge.
My ignorance is overwhelming. Truly, Lord, I was speaking
about things I knew nothing about... things I did not
understand. I was truly out of my depth."

For us to realize this is essential to our repentance as well... to know
longer think we know better than God.

4. Greater awareness of the WONDER of God's ways

***Job 42:3 Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too
wonderful for me to know.***

The word translated "wonderful" is incredible here. It means those
things that are AMAZING, creating awe and wonder and
ultimately WORSHIP

The complexity of creation is certainly among them... the inanimate universe, the world, its oceans, its mountains, its rivers, its weather... all of that is TOO WONDERFUL for me to know

It is beyond me to comprehend all the wonders of God's actions in creation

How much less can I understand the complexities of living creatures... a rock is amazing, an eagle is more amazing. All of it is too wonderful for me.

Isn't it striking that Job includes all the dimensions and details of God's wise plan here... including the vast sorrow of his own life, the death of his ten children. Though the pain is still fresh, his repentance includes their deaths in his word "wonders"

In heaven, when we look back at everything God did before us, around us, for us, in us, to us, through us, and after us... we will realize just how AMAZING and WONDERFUL and worthy of worship God really is

Essential to Job's repentance is to learn to not just submit to God's wise and fatherly decrees in his life, but to DELIGHT in them

5. A vision of God himself

Job 42:5 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.

This may be the greatest mystery of all in this entire book.

I know that some things must limit our understanding of these words:

God would say to Moses,

Exodus 33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

And the Apostle John wrote:

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God

So... the movement from HEARING about God to SEEING God is the movement from the realm of faith to the realm of sight... it is a foretaste of heaven

1 Corinthians 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

Perhaps this is one of those Old Testament theophanies... like Isaiah "I saw the Lord, high and exalted..."

Perhaps, as in Isaiah's case, this is the preincarnate Christ

John tells us:

John 12:41 Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

Perhaps this is the fulfillment of what Job declared earlier:

Job 19:25-27 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; ²⁷ I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

So, essential to Job's repentance is the DELIGHT and OVERWHELMING POWER of seeing God's glory... of realizing with his own eyes how beautiful and good and loving and powerful God is

As I said earlier, it is not the terror of the Lord that leads us to repentance... it is the KINDNESS of the Lord that leads us to repentance

And seeing the infinite beauty and glory of God in the face of Christ may well have been what completed Job's deep and pure repentance.

Seeing the glory of God will swallow up in victory all the suffering and pain and sorrow and disappointments you have had in your life.

6. A vision of himself as nothing before God

Job 42:5-6 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself

Job was FULL OF HIMSELF at his worst moments... he was so certain of his own righteousness and his willingness to TAKE GOD ON, to argue his case, to prove himself good and righteous... that all of these trials had been brutally unjust

Now, the vision of God in the whirlwind has transformed him forever

He realized "I am nothing!!! I am a sinner saved by grace. I am a spiritual beggar with nothing to offer. God doesn't need me... isn't impressed by me. My strength is nothing. My knowledge is nothing. I am nothing."

This is the levelling of true repentance.

Luke 18:13 But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

Genuine repentance is a deeply humbling work.

And this is what opens the door for God's grace to work:

Luke 18:14 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

7. Repentance in dust and ashes

Job 42:6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Understanding "I was created from the dust of the earth... and I will return to the dust of the earth."

I repent at the lowest level. My pride is absolutely levelled.

IV. Christ's Call to Us to Repent

A. Soon we will begin our study in the Gospel of Mark

B. As we Have Seen this Morning: The Central Call of the Gospel

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

C. Initial Repentance and Faith

Some who are here will need to come to their first repentance and faith in Christ... this is the day of salvation for you!!

D. Then... Every Area of our Lives Must Submit to the Kingdom

Martin Luther: Ninety-five Theses

Thesis #1: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent,' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."

When we are converted, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us and begins guiding us into all truth... much of that truth has to do with our own inner corruptions... our pride, selfishness, covetousness, anger, lust, impatience

Again and again, the Spirit will be showing you the need to repent

Job's words of repentance will ring true

"I have heard of you with my ears, but now my eyes have seen you. And I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

You will see that your own righteousness is as filthy rags compared to the perfect purity of Christ's righteousness... and you will yearn for that righteousness more and more!