

Jason Smith – Renewed Series

Part 1: Renewed Spirit

Social Post: Beyond our physical body lies our spirit. This spirit has been placed within us by God and it must be taken care of. Sometimes our spirit can become weary and defeated because of sinful decisions we make. In order to renew our spirit, we must repent and believe the gospel. This gospel is put on display in the story of Zacchaeus. When Jesus meets him, he is a thieving traitor who is only thinking about himself. When he encounters the love of Jesus in his home, Zacchaeus' spirit is renewed and it is evidenced by his extreme transformation. He used to cheat and steal, but now, he becomes generous and eager to make things right.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10-12// Luke 19:1-10

Introduction

There are times in our lives when it becomes apparent that God is interested in doing a new thing within us.

It can coincide with the changing of the year, the changing of the seasons, the changing of life circumstances, or the changing of a physical location.

God is interested in moving each of us, from time to time, into a deeper and more meaningful relationship with him. This can be scary. It can be hard. It can be confusing.

Either way, if we can recognize these times when God wants to renew us, we can lean in and allow him to do his good work.

In my experience, the work that God wants to do in us is holistic in nature. God's renewal is as much for our physical being as it is for our inner being. We are all more than just physical.

There is a depth to us that is soul and spirit. God desires for our spirit to experience renewal. Life can be hard and the trials that we face can cause our spirits to become weary.

Relational conflict can cause deep sorrow. Financial woes can be stressful. Disappointments can be so discouraging. All of these and more have a way of affecting our spiritual state.

However, there is one thing above everything else that causes us to need renewal within our spirit. That thing is sin.

The Bible talks about sin as a missing of the mark. It is an archery term that suggests that when we sin, we miss the intentions of God for us. Sin comes in many forms.

It might be overwhelming greed (drop color), it might be pride (drop color), we see it now in racism (drop color), sin is when we lie (drop color), sin can be a sin of commission or a sin of omission (drop color).

The Bible tells us that each of us were born with a sinful nature that has been handed down from the fall in chapter 3 of Genesis.

Since Adam and Eve disregarded God and decided to live for themselves, we have been following suit. When sin is in our lives, our spirit becomes dark and disconnects us from God.

Sin is a rejection of God and without renewal we are destined to spend eternity apart from God. We have to be renewed.

When we invite Jesus into our lives to forgive us and to give us strength to live differently, our spirit, our soul, is renewed.

1. A RENEWED SPIRIT IS A CLEAN SPIRIT

In the Old Testament, King David wrote a Psalm in the wake of his sinful actions with Bathsheba. After his adulterous affair and murder of Bathsheba's husband, David's spirit was dark.

His sin harmed his relationship with God and it harmed his relationship with others. Sin always does. In Psalm 51 David cries out to God for renewal.

READ Psalm 51:10-12

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right^[a] spirit within me.
¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**

**¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.**

Maybe you can relate to the words that David pens here. It is a desperate cry for forgiveness. It is deep repentance.

David acknowledges that the state of our spirit has an effect on our connection with our creator.

He is heartbroken over his actions. The thing David prays for is exactly what we have been addressing in this series. He asks for renewal. A renewed spirit within him.

This psalm and others are the very reason that David is referred to in the scriptures as a man after God's own heart.

It was not because David was flawless. It was not because David was perfect.

It was because David was willing to confront his sin and ask God for forgiveness and restoration.

A person who has a renewed spirit is a person who longs to be right with God and is willing to repent of sin in order to be fresh and clean of heart.

The question is are you heartbroken over your sin? Does it grieve you? Do you long for renewal?

There are stories all over the scriptures of individuals who, through repentance, experienced a renewed spirit within them. One story is of a man named Zacchaeus.

READ Luke 19:1-4

He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.

³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.

⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.

This man Zacchaeus is described in some pretty significant ways. First, he is a chief tax collector and also a Jew.

This more than likely means he was at least viewed, if not confirmed, to be a sympathizer with Rome and a thief. Many tax collectors would overcharge individuals to take some off the top and become rich.

Second, Zacchaeus was rich. This was likely true because of a practice of taking advantage of his clients. Zacchaeus may have been fully aware of his bad reputation and his corrupt heart.

Sometimes we are fully aware of our broken spirit, but we ignore it. Maybe, for Zacchaeus, this is the reason he wants to see Jesus so badly when Jesus comes to town.

The Bible tells us that Zacchaeus is so short he has to climb a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus.

2. OUR DESIRE FOR JESUS IS SEEN IN OUR ACTIONS

In the first four verses of this passage, we see a key component in experiencing a renewed spirit. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. It seems simple, but many individuals never get here.

Far too many of us never develop the desire to see Jesus in our lives.

We certainly would not do the hard work that Zacchaeus goes through to climb a tree to get a better vantage point of the Savior, but people who know their spirit is weary are desperate to get a glimpse of Jesus.

How much do you want Jesus to change your life? Would you be willing to do anything in order to have him renew your spirit?

Not climbing a tree, like in the story, but drawing near to God through prayer, through good counsel or through honesty with Him.

READ Luke 19:5-10

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”

⁶So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”

⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”

⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

A surprising twist happens in the story as Jesus looks up at Zacchaeus and acknowledges him and tells him to come down.

Jesus intends to go to Zacchaeus’ house and spend time with him. Can you imagine this man’s excitement? Maybe his fear?

Maybe a mix of emotions as the Messiah that he had been hearing about wants to come to his house.

Suddenly a man who was too short, a tax collector, a thief, and hated by many, was going to be hosting Jesus Christ. This was God’s way of saying, “no one is too far gone that I will not come to rescue them”.

Everyone who was standing there begins to mumble about how Jesus was going to spend time with a sinful tax collector. How could he possibly do something like this?

They had utterly missed the point that this is exactly what God does: he goes after those who are far from him and who are weary in spirit.

Maybe it is encouraging to know today that Jesus is coming after you today. You are not too far gone. Jesus extends his love and grace to you.

Zacchaeus' response to Jesus wanting to come to his house tells you everything you need to know about how eager he is to experience renewal.

He repents. He does what David did in Psalm 51. The real question is how do we respond? If our sin has harmed others, we demonstrate our desire for Jesus by making it right.

If our sin harms our relationship with God, we demonstrate our desire for Jesus by making a change.

Wabush, a town in a remote portion of Labrador, Canada, was completely isolated for some time.

But recently a road was cut through the wilderness to reach it. Wabush now has one road leading into it, and thus, only one road leading out.

If someone would travel the unpaved road for six to eight hours to get into Wabush, there is only way he or she could leave--- by turning around.

Each of us, by birth, arrives in a town called Sin. As in Wabush, there is only one way out--a road built by God himself. But in order to take that road, one must first turn around.

That complete about face is what the Bible calls repentance, and without it, there's no way out of town.

3. **RENEWAL REQUIRES REPENTANCE**

The word repent means to make a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turn. It means to no longer continue on the trajectory of life we have chosen. It means to turn around.

So, Zacchaeus promises to give half of his possessions to the poor. He promises to pay back four times as much from anyone he stole from. For this man, this is what repentance looks like.

For you and me, it may look like something different. When we encounter Jesus in a life changing way and when we ask God to forgive us, it means our life will never be the same. Either way, repentance should be followed by evidence.

You see, Zacchaeus experiences salvation based on his response to Jesus' invitation to come and spend time with him.

Jesus initiates it, but Zacchaeus' renewal takes place because of his obedient and humble response.

At the very end of this passage, Jesus gives us a glimpse into his mission here on earth. He says that he has come to seek and save the lost.

He came to pursue Zacchaeus, a lost tax collector. He has come to pursue you as well. It reminds me of the great hymn, Amazing Grace.

Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost
But now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

This beloved hymn was written by John Newton, a man who was a former enslaver.

“In 1748, Newton was on board a slaving ship called the Greyhound. The ship was in bad shape. During a violent storm, it began to fall apart and take on water.

A crew member was swept overboard. All night long Newton tried to keep the ship from going under.

And he thought about the state of his life. He knew he had run from God, hurt other people, and made a wreck out of his own situation. Newton realized he might die in the storm.

Would God still be forgiving, even after Newton had rejected Him? At last, Newton recalled what his mother had taught him from the Bible:

God loves to show mercy even to people who feel they are beyond redemption. Newton asked for God's help for the first time in years.”

Newton was fully aware of the wretch that he was. He knew where he had come from. He knew that he had been lost.

He needed to be renewed. He found the grace of God and that grace brought renewal to his spirit and he penned one of the most famous hymns of all time.

4. BE TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

I wonder what keeps us from responding to the invitation of Jesus to meet with us and our willingness to repent?

Maybe we believe we don't deserve grace. The grace of God cannot be earned. It is a free gift that is extended to each one of us. All we do it receive it, embrace it and be transformed by it.

We need to pinpoint our sin.

We need to trust God's grace for us.

We need to embrace God's grace for us.

We need to extend God's grace to others.

Response:

If you would like to experience a renewed spirit within you today, you can. All it requires is a simple prayer.