

Jer. 25:1-7 (WCF 15:3) “Provoking the Lord”

For the Children: Have you ever provoked your parents? For example, when you are being punished for doing wrong, have you cried out, “I don’t care! I didn’t do anything wrong! I’m not going to say I’m sorry!” – even though you know, deep down, that you did do wrong? Saying such things often gets you into more trouble. What parents want to hear is a humble admitting that you did wrong, that you ask for forgiveness and that you accept your punishment as something you deserve. That is what the Lord wants to hear from us concerning our sins. If we do that, it shows a godly attitude. It is what we expect from those who know the Lord Jesus.

Questions: How does God show mercy in the way He calls us to repent? Why can we not earn forgiveness by our repentance? What makes repentance so necessary for receiving God’s forgiveness?

Introduction:

First Point: The Mercy of a Repeated Call

- Judah’s Sins: Though the people of Judah committed many sins in the time between Josiah and Jehoiakim, the one singled out here is idolatry (vss.6 and 7) – though “the work of your hands” could include more than idolatry.
- A Pattern of Not Listening: Jeremiah stresses that the people did not listen (vss. 3,4 and 7). He emphasizes that this was despite the long (23) years he had been calling for repentance (vss. 1-3), “again and again.” This pattern of ignoring God’s warnings persisted with the responses to all the prophets – “again and again” (v. 4).
- A Matter of Mercy: This shows the great mercy and patience of the Lord, that He kept on warning despite the refusal of the people to listen.
- A Matter of Ingratitude: It also shows how ungrateful Judah was, that they refused to respond to this demonstration of mercy.

Second Point: The Nature of the Repeated Call

- Turn Now: This repeated call was a call to repentance – indicated by the word “turn” in v. 5. Repentance is turning from sin. It must be connected to faith, turning back to the Lord.
- Unnecessary for Earning Forgiveness: The repetition of this message shows how necessary repentance is. See Lk. 13:3,5; Mt. 4:17; and WCF 15:3. It is *not* necessary because by it we atone for our own sin or pay our own debt to God. The quality of our repentance is too poor to do that. There is no merit in our repentance. The merit in salvation comes only from Christ. We are forgiven when we repent, because of Him. Therefore, we may not “rest” on our own repentance as if it can make us right with God.
- Necessary for Demonstrating Union with Christ: Lack of repentance is, however, evidence of lack of union with Christ – a matter of a sinner’s *de*-merit. For this reason, repentance *is* necessary.

Third Point: The Provocation of the Repeated Call

- Do Not Provoke Me: Lack of repentance/refusing to listen to God’s warnings is described as provoking the Lord to anger (vss. 6 and 7). V. 7 even states that this is done “in order” to provoke the Lord.
- What Makes It So Bad: Refusal to repent is despicable because it rejects the Sovereign Kings’ call to repent. It also rejects His mercy in extending repeated calls to repentance. Ultimately, it rejects the Person and work of Christ who earns forgiveness for the repentant. That is also why repentance is necessary for forgiveness – not to supply merit, but as something that must be in place to receive the mercy of pardon.

Conclusion: