

The Day of the Lord

An Expository “Journey” Through the Prophecy of Joel

5- The Grace of God in Repentance

What Genuine Repentance Looks Like- Part 3

September 20, 2020

Joel 2:18-27

18 Then the Lord will be zealous for His land And will have pity on His people.

19 The Lord will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied in full with them; And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.

20 “But I will remove the northern army far from you, And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land, And its vanguard into the eastern sea, And its rear guard into the western sea. And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up, For it has done great things.”

21 Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, For the Lord has done great things.

22 Do not fear, beasts of the field, For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, For the tree has borne its fruit, The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.

23 So rejoice, O sons of Zion, And be glad in the Lord your God; For He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, The early and latter rain as before.

24 The threshing floors will be full of grain, And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.

25 “Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you.

26 “You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied And praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; Then My people will never be put to shame.

27 “Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, And that I am the Lord your God, And there is no other; And My people will never be put to shame.

To the Glory of God

Now the Question that I raised last time was,

“What does real, genuine, biblical Repentance look like?”

.. and we saw that Repentance was much more than merely being sorry. But that it included several aspects that the Bible talks about:

- A “Sorrow” a Grieving; a Conviction over our Sin- that is in “accord with the Will of God”
- A “change of mind”- based on an understanding of Scripture
- A planned and purposeful “turning *away*” from Sin
- A “turning *toward*” God- with a new zeal and determination to walk holy before God; along with a new hatred of Sin

And, under the inferior Old Covenant, the “Sorrow” that was “in accord with the Will of God” was illustrated by **Joel 2:13- 17** that says,

And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. Who knows whether He will not turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, Even a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God? Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her bridal chamber. Let the priests, the Lord’s ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, “Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not make Your inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, ‘Where is their God?’”

... and so, as the Prophet led the people in this genuine Repentance, look what the Lord promised them,

Then the Lord will be zealous for His land And will have pity on His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied in full with them; And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations. But I will remove the northern army far from you, And I will drive it into a parched and desolate

land, And its vanguard into the eastern sea, And its rear guard into the western sea. And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up, For it has done great things.” Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, For the Lord has done great things. Do not fear, beasts of the field, For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, For the tree has borne its fruit, The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full. So rejoice, O sons of Zion, And be glad in the Lord your God; For He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, The early and latter rain as before.

24 The threshing floors will be full of grain, And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil. Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied And praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; Then My people will never be put to shame. Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, And that I am the Lord your God, And there is no other; And My people will never be put to shame.

Now *when* will God do this? *When* will God restore them; and forgive them; and bless them? After they lay claim to the Promises of God? No! After they receive Divine health and material prosperity? No! After they speak *creatively* concerning their own Blessings and their Future? No!

So, *when* will God do all this? *When* is the time that is signified by the word, “**Then**” in verse 18 coming? After they repent. After they admit their Sins; and after they confess their faults; and after they rend their hearts; and after they fast; and after they call a Solemn Assembly; and after the priests weep between the porch and the altar; and after they become convicted of their lukewarmness and their shallowness and their backsliding; and after they put away their idols; and turn away from their Evil and their Wickedness.

We need to understand that the only place on earth where “Forgiveness” and “Blessings” and “Healing” comes *before* “Repentance” is in the dictionary. So, outside the dictionary- Repentance ALWAYS comes first- for us.

Now we need to remember what the setting is- here with Joel. A swarm of locusts have come to Israel (at some point about 800 years before Jesus was born) to devour every living green plant. And when these 3-4” long insects fly- there are so many of them- that they literally block out the sun. And as these locusts come down and begin to eat- *nothing* is spared. Every plant; every bush; every ear of corn; every vegetable; every blade of grass; every single barley and wheat stem is gone. But it doesn’t stop there. And as the days go by- every cow and horse and donkey and goat- also dies because there is no food for them. But it doesn’t stop there. Because as the animals die and all the vegetation is eaten- then people begin

to die. But it doesn't even stop there. Because now the air is filled with the stench of bloated dead bodies. And diseases, caused by the unsanitary conditions, begin to run through the land. And then the buzzards and vultures come; and they fill their mouths with every inch of flesh of both man and beast.

So, *this* is NOT a normal swarm of locusts. Locusts plagues were not *common* back then- but they were also not *uncommon*- either. But *this* Plague is NOT just dumb insects reacting to each other. *This* is NOT a derivative of global warming. *This* is NOT what many ancient civilizations endured. The Bible says God did this. And He did it *purposefully*. So, this isn't "Arbitrary" or "Accidental". This is NOT about "Luck" or "Chance" or even random "Fate". This is NOT about a lack of Science; or a lack of Satellites; or a lack of Technology. No, there is both Meaning and Purpose to *this* Invasion of insects. And the Meaning and Purpose of *this* Plague is the Judgment of God. And as strange as this may sound- this is about the Judgment of God against God's Own, chosen, people.

And so, this Invasion of insects in Israel about 800 years before Jesus was born- was an example of "Divine Judgment". And that means that this is NOT some random or accidental occurrence of Nature. This is very specific Judgment by God- against His Own people- for some very specific Sin- that is not revealed to us.

And people really suffered and died in this Invasion. And Joel calls this Judgment, the "Day of the Lord". So, this is the "Day" or the "Time" of God's *visitation* to His people- in fierce Wrath and frightening Destruction.

And that also means that the normal methods of handling the locust Invasion simply won't work this time. It will NOT be removed with the changing of the seasons; nor with increased rainfall; nor with the tides; nor with any of the "normal" cycles of the ongoing *operation* of the created world.

You see, according to the normal operation of the created world, as the Seasons change; and as rainfall increases- locust swarms usually go back to Africa; and lay dormant for up to twenty years.¹ But not this time! *This* invasion is Divine Judgment- and so, the normal operation of the created world has been temporarily *suspended*. God is now "uttering His Voice" before His army- so these unintelligent insects will accomplish His Will. God has now "come" to reckon with His people.

Now there are very few things in the life of a genuine believer as disheartening- as the long struggle with "persistent Sins". And this is *particularly* true when we have experienced amazing victories over Sin in other areas of our life. So, we know God has the Power to get rid of our Sin. So, why won't He?

¹ Science doesn't know why this happens.

Now, this may sound somewhat *counter-intuitive*- but, I suggest to you that Victory over some Sin *tarries*- because God desires to teach us how to truly repent. You see, God desires for His people to understand, not only how to walk in Holiness- but how to also, obey His Command to “*rend our hearts*” when we “fall short” of His Glory (**Joel 2:13/Romans 3:23**).

Of course, Sin in our life- is a huge Problem. But living a life- where we have *never* learned how to truly repent- may be an even *greater* Problem. And to suggest that born again believers are somehow *exempt* from this type of broken-hearted Repentance- is blasphemy.

Those of you, who know me, understand that I absolutely believe in *uniting* the two sides of Biblical Christianity together: Doctrine with Practice; Ortho-doxy with Ortho-praxy; Right believing with Right doing. So, of course, I believe that we should put forth effort to “cease from Sin”. But to suggest that my ceasing from Sin is *solely* an act of my human choice; and my human will-power; and my human determination- is to be just as Pelagian; and just as carnal; and just as worldly; and just as reprobate- as the Sin itself.

So, I will tell you that HOW we repent- is just as important- as actually repenting. Because *how* does anyone *casually* grieve over Sin? How can anyone be nonchalant; or laid back; or stoic; or unconcerned about dishonoring God? Listen, not “rending my heart” over my Sin- makes me a rebel. Not being truly broken over my Transgressions- is for me to disobey the Bible. Going alone’ and “doing my own thing” as it pertains to Repentance- is as sinful as the Sin I am supposedly turning from.

It would be simple for God to just sovereignly *cause* me to never sin again. I mean, after all- God is absolutely Sovereign; over everything- all the time. Yet God doesn’t do that. Why? So, I will learn what “Gracious Humiliation” is all about.

Now what do I mean by “Gracious Humiliation”? The word, “Humiliation” is an English derivative of the word, “Humble”. God told us *repeatedly* throughout the entire Bible,

James 4:6

GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

Now the word, “opposed” means: *to resist or to fight against*. So, God *resists* me- when I am proud. God *fights against* me- when I am proud. And God **ONLY** gives me His Grace- when I am Humble. So, being Proud is one of the *worst* things I can be. “Arrogance”; “Pride”; “Self-Righteousness”; and “Self-sufficiency is *worse* than being a homosexual; it is *worse* than being a drug-addict;

and it is *worse* than being a liar or a thief. In fact, I would tell you that Pride actually *causes* those other Sins. In **Proverbs 6:16**, when listing human attributes that offend God the most- the wisest man in the world said,

There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

... and the very *first* item on the list was,

“Haughty eyes”

... which is simply another way of understanding Human Arrogance; Pride; Self-righteousness; and Self-sufficiency.

So, “Humiliation” is the Act or the Process of me becoming Humble. And us being Humble- is one of the most *important* Goals of Salvation. When Jesus was in His “Humiliation” it was when He submitted Himself to His Father’s Will to be captured; beaten; paraded around; and, finally murdered on the Tree. But when I am Humiliated- it is when I am being so radically changed (by a sovereign and ongoing Act of God the Holy Spirit), that I am gifted with being able to behold God’s Glory in the Face of Jesus Christ. And that will do two things to me:

1. **I will truly delight in obeying Jesus**
2. **I will truly grieve over my Sin**

... and that will help to kill my Pride and my Arrogance; my Self-righteousness and my own Self-sufficiency- which is this “Gracious Humiliation”.

You see, me NOT seeing Jesus, for Who He really is- the Glory of God- is Sin. Because the only reason I can’t see Him like that- is because *something else* fills my eyes; *something else* has captured the imagination of my heart; *something else* occupies my sight; and *something else* has possession of my affections.

But if I do see Jesus like that- I will find the fullness of my own Joy- in Him; in *obeying* Him; and in *making much* of Him. But I can only do that- to the degree that I am “brought low”- in my own Humiliation.

And that is why Pride is the greatest hinderance to Salvation. Being deceived by the notion that human beings have the Right to live according to the dictates of their own hearts- rather than to submit to God and His Ways- completely *eliminates* people from any Hope of Salvation.

There is only ONE way that anyone can be saved- and that is to be *gifted* by God to realize that we are wicked sinners- who deserve *nothing* but eternal Damnation. And that Realization is a Gift of God- you can’t *work it up*; you can’t

manufacture it- and you can't *fake* it. And that Realization is *intensely* personal; it is *intensely* insulting; and it is *intensely* humiliating.

And to *further* the process of our Humiliation- we also must be graciously granted the wondrous ability to understand that we CANNOT do anything about our sinful condition- in and of ourselves- and that we NEED a merciful Savior.

But this Humiliation is also "Gracious"- because when I am humble- God has promised to give me His Grace. And when God's Grace is mine- I am on my way to pleasing and honoring God; and of making much of Him.

But as long as we list for God all the "Good things" we do; as long as we parade all of our supposed "noble qualities"; as long as we continue to argue with God about whether we are actually lost; and fallen; and wicked; and sinful; and helpless; as long as we *insist* on holding on to our filthy Pride; and our stinking Arrogance; and our rotten Self-righteousness; and our putrid Self-sufficiency; as long as we *categorically* deny that we are "*all Evil- all the time*" (**Genesis 6:5**)- we will die in our Sins.

Only those who have *been empowered* to agree with God about themselves may be saved. Only those who have *been made willing*- to cast off every vestige of human Accomplishment; every article of human Production; and every trace of human Ability- may be saved. In other words, only those who have been graciously and sovereignly been "brought low"- may be saved. That is "Gracious Humiliation".

Now, if you notice, nearly every time Salvation is mentioned anywhere in the Bible- it is almost always associated with two other things:

1. God being glorified
2. Man being humbled

The Bible says that the main reason God created Salvation to be "by" His Grace ALONE; and "through" the Gift of saving Faith ALONE; and "in" (or by) Jesus Christ ALONE- was,

Ephesians 2:9b
... so that no one may boast

... and most everyone in this Sanctuary this morning would agree with that. So, all I am saying is that EVERYTHING else we do FOR Jesus- AFTER we are saved- is carried out EXACTLY the same way:

- "By" God's Grace- ALONE
- "Through" the Gift of Faith"- ALONE

➤ **“In” or “By” Jesus Christ- ALONE**

... *including* our Obedience to His Word and Will; all our Good Works that we do; all the Fruit we bear- even our Repentance!

Now about 1,700 years ago, God raised up a man named, Augustine to do battle with a heretic named, Pelagius. And this was one of the most *important* Battles in the history of the Church. In fact, whether you realize this or not- we are **STILL** fighting this Battle in our day. And one of the most important aspects of this titanic Struggle was over the Issue of God’s Grace.

Pelagius said that we **DON’T** need God’s Grace to do what God has already told us to do. The heretic said that the fact that God told us to do something indicated that we *already have* the ability to obey. All we need to do is to put forth human Willpower; combined with human Determination- and we can obey God.

Augustine said, “*No!*” This hero of our Faith said that that Scripture taught that we don’t need God to simply tell us *what* to do- but we need God’s Grace to *empower* and *enable* us to obey Him- combined with the Gift of Faith that allows us to Hope and Trust in God and in His Promises.

Augustine taught that if Pelagius was correct- then it would be perfectly appropriate for us to boast about our Obedience; and therefore, we would be *entitled* to the Glory. In fact, he reasoned that if we put our minds toward our Obedience- and *that* alone is what brought it about- then God would be a thief to want all the Glory.

Sadly, most people in the modern church have forgotten about this battle. But we must not. We must know that we don’t just need God’s Grace and the Gift of Faith to be saved. No, we need God’s Grace and the Gift of Faith to obey God and His Word- **AFTER** we are saved. And we need God’s Grace and the Gift of Faith- to repent.

Now the very moment Adam sinned- God *could* have just issued a Divine Decree and said,

“Everybody alive now; and all who will ever be alive- is hereby Forgiven and made Righteous- so they can all live in Heaven with Me- forever!”

Now there are a number of reasons why God didn’t do that. But one of the most *important* reasons- is because God desired that **BOTH** of those two things would *always* be true about Salvation:

1. **That God alone would be glorified**
2. **That Man would be humbled**

... and both of these two things are almost *always* put together- so that we may say:

God ALONE is glorified in Salvation- only to the degree that Man is humbled.

... or we could say it the other way:

Man is humbled by Salvation- only to the degree that God ALONE is glorified.

In other words, for one to be true- the other *has* to also be true. And that means that if one is NOT true- then the other will NOT be true. So, unless I am humbled- God CANNOT be glorified. Or, unless God is glorified- I CANNOT be humbled. Another way you could look at this is to say,

The Path to my Humility- is by and through God ALONE being glorified

.. or...

The Way in which God ALONE is glorified- is by and through my Humiliation

... so, sooner or later, we have to get to the place where we understand:

True Repentance- like all “Good things”- is a Gift of God

... it is a Miracle; a Marvel; a sovereign Act of God the Holy Spirit. And it should be one of my most fervent prayers.

Now back in **Joel 2:12b& 13**- God through Joel called to Israel,

... Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping, and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments.

... and we found out that back in the Old Testament, people commonly expressed great Grief and Anguish by tearing their clothes. But more than caring about the proper “signs” of being upset about their Sin- God cared that they actually grieved over Sin in their hearts- and grieved to the point of weeping and mourning.

Now in his famous “Psalm of Repentance” (**Psalm 51**), David reminded us that God does not delight so much in the outward “signs” of Repentance (which

included making a sacrifice), because those signs could be faked. but David was “moved” to say,

Psalm 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

... and this is merely an Old Testament illustration of a “Sorrow” that is “according to the Will of God”. And what did the Apostle Paul teach was the result of this kind of Sorrow?

2Corinthians 7:10a

For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation...

Because of the Fall- human beings have an *enormous* ability to simply go through the motions when it comes to *anything* pertaining to God. But these infallible passages show that the most important thing is the condition of our heart. So, does your Repentance look like a heart that has been “rent like a garment”; “broken” and “contrite”- as it beats before God? This attitude is missing from most so-called Repentance- yet it’s the very thing God wants to teach us!

Now, the first Question people ask at this point- proves that the Fall turned us into “Pelagians by birth”. We ask,

What do I need to do to have this kind of humbled, broken, and rent heart?

...and the fact that we ask a Question like that- shows us how all-pervasive the effects of the Fall has been on us. We are *always* wanting to know what we need to “do” to have; or to possess; or to accomplish what God wants for us. And the only Answer is: We don’t “do” *anything* to “get” a humble and broken and contrite and torn heart like that. We must be sovereignly and graciously “*given*” a heart like that! So, we don’t “get” saved. We are sovereignly and graciously and mercifully saved. But we don’t “do” *anything* to earn it. All of our “doing” that we find all over the Bible- is nothing more than a humble; feeble; flawed; grateful; and loving *response* to the great and majestic and supernatural and miraculous, and powerful, and eternal Work that God Almighty has already done in us!

Beloved, we have a great need to be reminded that Jesus called us, “sheep”. So, what do sheep do? Nothing! They don’t plant; or build; or harvest; or create ANYTHING! All they do- is cry. They bleat. That is ALL they do. It is ALL

they *can* do. So, as His sheep, we should cry to God. We should cry that God would *help* us; and *empower* us; and *enable* us- to repent. We should cry- that God would be Good to *visit* us; and *embrace* us; and *create* within us- both the Desire and the Ability to grieve over our Sin. We should cry to God- for Him to give us a *broken* heart; a *contrite* heart; and a *rent* heart.

And we should cry to God- that He would give us sight- to see our Sin as the hideous thing it is: until we recognize that the Sin- that casts unbelievers into Hell- is infinitely WORSE than Hell itself.

And we need to cry to God- that He would be merciful to us- to unveil our eyes- so that we may “behold the Glory of God- in the Face of Jesus Christ”. Because the more glimpses that we are given of God’s Glory in Jesus- the more our hearts will *mourn* over our Sin. The reason that people do not mourn over Sin any more- is NOT because we don’t sin- it is because we have not seen the Glory of God in Jesus- which is what our Sin offends; and tarnishes; and belittles; and scorns.

Now how do I know this is true? Because of what Joel said in verse 27:

Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, And that I am the Lord your God, And there is no other...

Now *when* will this happen? When the people of God repent. So, *what is it* that will happen when God’s people repent? They will KNOW that God is the “Lord”- and that there is no other. In other words, the Goal of Repentance is NOT that God will simply forgive us- so we can go about our business as usual. No, going about our “business as usual” is what caused the Sin which precipitated our NEED to repent in the first place. So, that isn’t Repentance. That isn’t a “turning”. Repentance *demand*s CHANGE. And so, without the Change- there has been no “Turning”. And without the Turning- there has been no Repentance. And without Repentance- there has been no Forgiveness.

And what did Joel say here was the Result of true Repentance? A true Vision of Who God is- in His Glory! That we would KNOW- not guess; not hope; not wonder; not even believe- but that we would KNOW- without any doubt; without wavering; without being wishy- washy- Who God is. That we would KNOW that God is the Lord: that the one, true, and living God; Who is revealed in both Creation and Scripture- is the our Healer; and our Deliverer; and our Supplier; and our Provider; and our All-in-all!

So, true Repentance will enable us to KNOW that Jesus is the Lilly of our valley; our bright and morning Star; the beautiful Rose of Sharon; and the Fairest of ten-thousand to our souls. Repentance will allow us to KNOW that Jesus is our Ark of Safety; our Rock of clean Water; our raised up Tabernacle; and our

Sabbath's Rest. True, broken-hearted Repentance will give us the ability to KNOW that Jesus will never fail; because He never sleeps or slumbers; and that our names are written on the palms of His Hands.

And true Repentance will give us the Hope that satan can't stop this; the evil decisions of wicked people can't stop this; and even our Sin can't stop this. Because when we sin- we will be broken; and we will repent!

The very *first* Commandment given to Moses was:

Exodus 20:3

You shall have no other gods before Me.

... and this Commandment stood at the Head of Israel's Laws and in a sense summed them all up. So, the first Commandment is all about Who God is- and what God ALONE has done. And if we KNOW this God- rightly- we will worship Him- and Him only. And all the moral Standards of this God will inevitably guide us in every area of Life- until all of our Life- is Worship.

Now this Law was well known in Israel. It guided the people's understanding of both Religion and Morality. But it is not just a Guide for Israel- it is a Guide for us as well. And since we are studying **Joel** for what it says to us today; as well as for what it said to Judah in Old Testament times- we must see this Law in a contemporary light.

Clearly, to worship any God but Yahweh- is to break this Commandment. But it is not necessary to worship a clearly defined "god" to break it (i.e. Baal, Zeus, Minerva, a Roman emperor, or one of the idols of the many pagan tribes of our own day). No, we break this Commandment whenever we give some person; or some thing- that "first place" in our Affections that belongs to God alone. Quite often this "substitute god" may very well be ourselves; or our *opinion* of ourselves. Sometimes, it is things like Success; or Material Possessions; or Fame; or Personal Dominance over others.

So, what would the "keeping" of this Commandment look like? John Stott wrote,

"If only we could see Jesus in the fullness of Who He is and what He has done! Why then surely, we should see how worthy He is of our wholehearted allegiance, and faith, love and obedience would be drawn out from us and we would grow into maturity. Nothing is more important for mature Christian discipleship *than* a fresh, clear, true vision of the authentic Jesus. This is truly the keeping of the first Commandment"²

² John Stott; *The Radical Disciple; Some Neglected Aspects of Our Calling*; IVP Books; September, 2014; page 87

... in other words, to keep the first Commandment is to see Jesus as the Treasure of the Universe! And the *more* I read the Bible; the *more* I pray; the more I understand God's Word- the more I am convinced that "seeing Jesus as the Treasure of the Universe" is THE single most important thing we could ever be blessed with.

But *why* should we do this? *Why* should we have no other gods but Yahweh? The Answer is in the preface to this very first Commandment,

Exodus 20:2

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

... this preface is, at the same time, a preface to the whole of the Decalogue. And it is in two parts:

1. Because of Who God is (**I am the Lord your God**)
2. Because of what He alone has done. (**Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery**)

So, the reason we should obey these Commands is that the God, Who is speaking in the Commandments, is the *true* God. He is the God, Who is without beginning or end- "**I am who I am**" (**Exodus 3:14**). God is *entirely* "Self-existent". No one created Him; And therefore, He is responsible to no one. Our God is totally "Self-sufficient". Therefore, He needs no one; and He does not depend on anyone for anything. And yet, He saved us!

So, the reasoning behind the first Commandment applies to every human being. Because all have been blessed by God. All have *benefited* from the progressive advance of Divine Truth over pagan superstition through the Revelation conveyed to the world through the Scriptures. Yet, do we worship God wholly and exclusively as a result? No, we do not! Consequently, the first Commandment virtually shouts to us that we are ungrateful, disobedient, rebellious, and ruled by Sin.

So, we need to cry to God- that He give us the understanding that our Sin- is NOT an issue of "Performance"- but an Issue of "Intimacy" with Jesus. Sin is NOT merely something we did wrong; or something we didn't do correctly. No, it is much more awful than that. We sin- because we have not reached a place where we *enjoy* Jesus MORE- than whatever insignificant joy- our Sin promises.

Sin is the result of being deceived that the rotten delight that our Sin promises- is far BETTER than the infinite Delight that is in Jesus. So, Sin is NOT an Issue of our Performance. If that were true- then the only Grief we would experience would be a disappointment in our inability to do what is Right- NOT

that we have “despised” the living God. Hear the Word of the Lord in **2Samuel 12:9a**

Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight?

The Bible teaches that when we sin, we play the part of an Adulterer- who looks for Satisfaction in another- rather than the One, Who has bought us- and the ONLY One, Who can satisfy. And *that* is why David said to the Lord,

Psalm 51:4

Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight...

Now this statement puzzled me for many years. Didn't David sin against Bathsheba and her Husband too? And what about faithful Uriah's family? Didn't David sin against them as well? It was not until, by Grace, I came into the Reformed Faith- with its emphasis on the absolute Sovereignty of God- that I understood that David *correctly* comprehended that *all* his failures- *all* his Sins- were merely outward manifestations that testified about the *lack* of his Relationship with God. And *that* is why his heart was grieved. Because only when we have sinned against the One we love- may our hearts be truly grieved.

So, we need to cry to God- that He would visit us- NOT in Judgment- but to give us insight into the Reality that true Repentance does NOT come merely by understanding the *relational* aspect of Sin, but by understanding the Nature of the One- with Whom we are in relationship.

In other words, the more we see God as being glorious and holy; and as being truly All-sufficient; and as the ONLY Source of living waters; the more we understand God as being- NOT the harsh Task-master- expecting us to dance to His Tune- but as the Fullness of our Joy; the End of our Delight; and the very Epitome of our ultimate Satisfaction- the more we will see Sin- as something to weep over.

So, we should cry to God- that He would enable us to understand that Repentance is *less* about feeling bad over our behavior- and *more* about feeling Awe and Delight towards God. So, the more glimpses we have of the Glory of God- the more we will mourn for *scorning* that Glory; and of *exchanging* that Glory for earthly trinkets and idols (**Romans 1:22&23**).

The one, true, and living God is white-hot in His Passion to have a people- who have been “made Holy”- by what He alone has done *for* them; and *in* them; and *to* them- to the very *same* degree that He is Holy (**1Peter 1:16**). And *nothing* will stop that Passion! Nothing! So, if you are His- then know this: God will NEVER stop working with you- until you are there!

And part of being that chosen; and called out; and separated; and peculiar people- is that we will be a brokenhearted people- who have learned to mourn over our Sin! And that is “Gracious Humiliation”.

And what will be the result of this genuine Repentance?

Then the Lord will be zealous for His land And will have pity on His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied in full with them; And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations. But I will remove the northern army far from you, And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land, And its vanguard into the eastern sea, And its rear guard into the western sea. And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up, For it has done great things.” Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, For the Lord has done great things. Do not fear, beasts of the field, For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, For the tree has borne its fruit, The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full. So rejoice, O sons of Zion, And be glad in the Lord your God; For He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, The early and latter rain as before. 24 The threshing floors will be full of grain, And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil. Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied And praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; Then My people will never be put to shame. Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, And that I am the Lord your God, And there is no other; And My people will never be put to shame.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

