

REPENTANCE
Message 6
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INTRO: Our subject is repentance. As we have seen already, it is a big subject and a very important one to all Christianity. We do not have revival because we do not have repentance, and we do not have repentance because conviction of sin is not strong enough. My wife and I attended some meetings the Sutera Twins held years ago in Ontario. There was something hindering revival and they felt it was the pastor himself, who had called them there. How heavy must conviction be before the Christian in the pew repents before man?

Just as I was working on this I came across this quote by Augustus H. Strong's book on systematic theology that I had underlined years ago. It says: "We are required to confess to another, and specially to those whom we have wronged." He then quotes James 5:16 and goes on like this: This puts the hardest stress upon our natural pride. There are a hundred who will confess to a priest or to God, where there is one who will make frank and full penitence to the aggrieved party" (834).

Well, we realize the need for revival. But it does not happen without conviction of sin. As long as we think we are in the right we will never repent. When we realize we are in the wrong, even then most won't repent. Only when conviction is heaped very high and we find it almost unbearable to live with ourselves any more will we repent to another whom we have wronged.

Warren Smith warns about a false revival coming. Healing meetings may bring about followers, but healing meetings do not bring about repentance. They may cause someone to give credibility to the message of Christ. And if they there begin to believe that Jesus is the true Saviour, then somewhere they must yet be brought to repentance. No matter what brings one to believe Jesus is the Christ, repentance must follow once one recognizes the facts. Miracles may bring about followers, but unless they bring repentance, they too only create followers. Any religious movement of any kind, unless it brings about conviction of sin and true repentance is not a true Christian

revival. If you should hear about great revivals happening somewhere, unless you hear about real repentance from sin, and changed lives with regard to sin afterward, you know it is not a true Gospel revival.

I want to address three difficulties with regard to repentance. First, is repentance a gift? And second, are there some who can't repent? And last, how is repentance brought about?

V. QUESTIONS REGARDING REPENTANCE

A. Is Repentance A Gift?

There is a question related to repentance that I have studied for some time. The Bible commands repentance, yet there are few passages that seem to indicate that repentance is a gift. They are Acts 5:31; 11:18; and 2 Timothy 2:25. I gave a message on 2 Timothy 2:25 some time ago and so I won't deal with it here. That leaves us with two to consider. However, the command to repent occurs over and over, and the instruction to preach repentance is clear. Acts 17:30 says that God commands all men everywhere to repent. If repentance is a gift in such a way that one can't repent unless one gets the gift of repentance, and that gift is withheld from the majority, then the command to repent to such people is a sin.

It is the view of the Calvinist that just such is the case. According to this teaching both repentance and faith are a gift given only to the elect. There is no evidence that saving faith is a gift. When faith is spoken of as a gift, it is always a gift for believers, not unbelievers. But there are three Scriptures given as evidence that repentance is a gift. I do not want to be unkind to those who hold to Calvinism and who may listen to this message. If my representation of Calvinism is wrong, please let me know. Calvinism is quick to say that God elected a few to salvation. What they do not talk about as easily is the doctrine of reprobation. What the doctrine of reprobation teaches is that God made the majority of mankind as reprobates. That means they cannot believe and they cannot repent.

The reason they can't do either of those is because God did not elect them. So God reprobated the majority of mankind.

God then commanded all mankind to repent and believe. And because the majority cannot do what He made them to do because they are incapable of obeying, they fail to repent and to believe. God then sends them to hell because they can't do what He made them incapable of doing, and in all this He is glorified. In my view that is cruelty of the highest extreme. It would be like a dad commanding his 6 year old son to move some mountains a few miles closer to their home and then punishing him without end for not being able to do that!

Consider now these passages I have mentioned. First is Acts 5:30-31. It says:

30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Note now that God gave repentance to Israel. But I ask, did all Israel get saved? No! Few did. So how could it be said God gave them repentance if they did not repent? Why did so few Jews get saved? Well, read the Gospels and Acts and you will see that they refused this gift!

Consider the second passage which is Acts 11:18. It says:

18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

In the first passage God granted repentance to Israel. In this passage He grants repentance to the Gentiles. Only a Jew can understand how incredible it is that God would grant repentance to the Gentiles. And how did God

give repentance to the Gentiles? Well, you can read the account in Acts 10, how a Gentile sent a message to the Apostle Peter and he went and preached the Gospel to them and they turned to God in faith. When the other apostles heard about this, they were upset. In their thinking, salvation was only for the Jews! So Peter recounted this whole story, and here is the response of those who had been upset with Peter in Acts 11:18:

18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Did all Gentiles get saved? No! How did God grant repentance to the Gentiles? The same way He granted it to the Jews. First they received the message of the Gospel. Second, they believed that message which resulted in repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as not all Jews are saved even though repentance has been granted to them, so not all Gentiles are saved though repentance has been granted to them all.

Now here is the clear word of Scripture: Salvation is for all of mankind! Repentance and faith are for all those who respond to the Gospel. If someone who is not saved should listen to this message, this is the good news for you: God so loved the world, all of mankind, that He sent His only Son to die for you that through repentance and faith you might have life eternal!

In Calvinism, repentance is given arbitrarily. Only the elect can repent. Whether someone gets saved or not is God's choice, not mans. But in Scripture, Jesus died for all of mankind. Repentance and faith are for all those who choose it. There may be someone who will listen to this message, and you feel you are not able to get saved because you must not be one of the elect. Things have never gone well for you. You just feel that you are rejected by God. That thinking does not come from God. It comes from God's enemy. You can repent and believe by your own choice. You are no less qualified

for salvation than any other person. The choice is yours.

I believe God's chief attribute is goodness. Some disagree and believe holiness is His chief attribute. Either way, if some can repent and believe, but the majority can't, then God is neither holy nor good. That makes him horrible.

I believe man is able to and must choose to repent when he hears the truth. God has provided everything man needs to obey the command to repent. I base that on at least two major truths. The first is the character of God. He is holy and good and just, and if He is those things He would not command something that is not possible for some. He would not command man to do what He made man incapable of doing.

Then second, I base it on the capacity God made man with. We go to Genesis 2:28:

27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

God made man, then He blessed him, and then He commanded him. What does it mean that God blessed them? The TWOT says of the word "to bless" that it means "to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc. It is frequently contrasted with *qalal* 'esteem lightly, curse' (cf. Deut 30:1, 19)."

God blessed mankind, that is He made mankind capable of obeying Him. If God commanded man to do things and then made them incapable of doing that, then He would have cursed man. But the opposite is true; He blessed them. That is He made them capable of doing that which He had instructed them to do. God commands repentance. Many times we read the imperative: Repent!

God could not command man to be fruitful and multiply if He had not created him with the capacity to do so. No more could God command man to do anything if man was not made with the capacity to fulfill those commands. The abilities to repent and to believe are capacities mankind has been endowed with at creation.

So to conclude on repentance being given to both the Jews and the Gentiles, I believe it is a gift because it cannot be earned by works. Nothing in salvation can ever be earned. Christ's death on man's behalf is a gift. No one can ever earn that. The message of the Gospel is a gift. No one can ever earn that, and without that death and without that message no one ever can repent of sins and be forgiven. So neither repentance, nor the resulting forgiveness of sins, are earned. They are free. I believe that is why it is called a gift.

Augustus H. Strong was an ardent Calvinist. He has written one of the finest and most detailed systematic theology books I know of. He talks about repentance as a gift in the Calvinistic sense and then he says, "Of course it is true that God might give repentance simply by inducing man to repent by the agency of His Word, his providence and His Spirit. But more than that seems to be meant when the Psalmist prays: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me' (Ps. 51:10)" (782). As a Calvinist, to him repentance must be a gift that is given only to the elect. The rest, whom God reprobated, cannot repent.

There is another wrong teaching on repentance, and it is this: Some say repentance is a work and therefore is not necessary for salvation. That is high heresy. Repentance is not a work and does not merit anything. It is a qualification for forgiveness of sins, and cannot in any wise be earned nor does it earn anything. Surely in that sense it must be viewed as a gift.

The message that brings repentance is free. The conviction produced by the truth of God's Word is free. Changing one's mind does not come by earning it, it too

is free. The will of the person repenting must be fully engaged in cooperation with the conviction produced on the heart by the Gospel message and one must choose to change one's mind and life regarding those sins. All of this is free, and can in no wise be earned.

Go to Genesis 3. We might learn from the very first two people that ever lived. Adam and Eve had sinned. That is recorded in 3:1-7. God had told them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The devil had created a desire in them by which he led them to do that which God had commanded them not to do. Now they had sinned. They were guilty of sin. This is a most horrible place to be.

But what is man's most natural response to sin? Verse 7 tells us:

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

The very first thing they did was to seek to cover their sin. That is a picture of all religion. Who wants to be exposed? Nobody! It is almost impossible to expose sin. It is a divine work to expose sin.

Verse 8:

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

What happens when the sound of God comes to us after we have sinned? We now stand in the danger of exposure. Now think of this: Adam and Eve had covered themselves, so why did they hide when they heard God coming? Should they not have been secure under their fig leaves? God can see clear through man's manmade coverings so one must still hide from Him. Verse 9:

9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

God did not ask that because He did not know where Adam was, it was Adam who did not know where he was. God was tugging on Adam's covering. When we are covering some sin and someone tugs on our covering and we are in danger of exposure, we run to hide. And how hard is it for God to get us to see where we are when we need to repent and confess? It is well-nigh impossible. Adam is not yet ready to acknowledge his sin.

Verse 10:

10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Adam says, "You see Lord, I can explain." So he explained why he hid himself. But that was not the real reason he hid himself. He hid himself because of his sin, which he is not yet ready to confess.

Verse 11:

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

Do you see how God is trying to get him confess his sin? And do you see how he is fighting it? So here we have another question by God. God is seeking to bring Adam out of hiding. But he is still dressed in fig leaves and he is still hiding. Now God asks, "Could the real reason that you are hiding be the fact that you did what I told you not to do?"

"Oh, no Lord. That is not exactly the way it was. I can explain."

Verse 12:

12 Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

The light is shining closer and closer and Adam is getting squeezed to the point of confession. He says, "Lord, it is true that I did what you told me not to do, but it was not really my fault. You actually are

partly at fault. It happened because of the woman You gave me." How hard is it for God to expose man? And what keeps man hidden? It is nothing but his pride and that pride has to be dealt with.

If you happen to think women are not like that as well, look at the next verse:

13 And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Now I ask you, if God had not come to Adam and Eve, would they ever have repented? Without question, they would not have. Let me say this: If God cannot expose us we will never repent. Neither I, nor you, nor anyone else will repent without exposure. By some means such as the Word of God, the Spirit of God, or our conscience, or through life's circumstances we must be brought to conviction before we ever repent.

Could we say that Adam and Eve in any way earned this repentance by doing good works? Not at all! So then it is a gift!

Think with me of David and Bathsheba. Turn to 2 Samuel 11. Watch how David can hide by covering his tracks. Oh how he hid. Oh how he fought with his conscience. Oh how he tried to make it look like he was innocent. But Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, was a godly man. He was from that ungodly nation of the Hittites. But he had been converted to the God of Israel. He was so converted that he changed his Hittite name to a Jewish biblical name, Uriah, which means Jehovah is my light.

Divine light had exposed him, and now this godly man refused all human instincts and desires in order to walk in the light. We begin in verse 6:

6 Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7 *When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered.*

Oh the subtlety of sin! David could have gotten this information without calling a soldier home. But it gets worse.

Verse 8:

8 *And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him.*

Surely Uriah is a full blooded human. The king has set him up. But look at this godly man.

Verse 9:

9 *But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.*

Oh the sneakiness of sin. This very potential lies in every human heart including my own.

Vese 10:

10 *So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"*

What will this godly man say to this?

Verse 11:

11 *And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing."*

Listen to this man's name: Jehovah is my light! No matter how David tries to set him up, Uriah is true to

Jehovah, his light. Well, by now David has hit desperation.

Verse 12:

12 Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.

13 Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

When we have sinned and we are covering our tracks, what do you do in a case like this? David wanted to make it look like Bathsheba's child was Uriah's.

Verse 14:

14 In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die."

Uriah rode back to the war zone with his death warrant in his pocket. He delivered it to Joab, the army general and he died in the war. Nobody would ever know about that. David's main problem was over; Uriah is dead. Or was it over? Like Adam and Eve, he had made his own covering for sin. There is much more to the story which you can read.

But later God spoke to Nathan the prophet. God had seen it all. We go to chapter 12. God gave Nathan a parable by which He would cause David to shine the light of Uriah's God on himself. Oh, the horrible moment of exposure! Nathan told David about a rich man who had all kinds of sheep. But he robbed a sheep from a poor man who only had one lamb and it has been his pet and the rich man used it to feed a traveler rather than using one of his many.

That made David angry, and he said in verse 5-6:

5 So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!

6 "And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!..."

Through exposure, David repented. Now I ask you, if God had not sent Nathan to David, would David ever have repented? Answer? I do not see how. Then I ask you, is repentance not a gift? It would never happen if man is not exposed.

Is repentance a gift? Yes! It is free! All one has to do is choose to obey God when one is exposed.

B. Is Repentance Not Possible for Some?

I ask one more question: Are there some people who cannot repent? Go to Hebrews 12 to see why I ask this question. We'll read verses 14-17:

14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Could Esau not repent though he sought it with tears? This passage seems to teach that some people might not be able to repent. My wife shared a thought on this some time ago that she had on this passage. Let us read

the passage that Hebrews related to. Turn to Genesis 27. Isaac, the father of Jacob and Esau, was old and close to the time of death. And he had asked Esau to get some venison and make his favorite meal for him and then he would bless Esau before he died, because Esau was the older son. But Rebekah had Jacob, Esau's brother, quickly get a young goat and prepare the meal Jacob wanted. He did so, and Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau. Later Esau made the meal his father requested and brought it to Isaac and we begin in verse 31:

31 He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me."

32 And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" So he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau."

33 Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed."

34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me—me also, O my father!"

35 But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing."

36 And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"

37 Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?"

38 *And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me—me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.*

Esau sought repentance with tears. Here is my wife's thought. Esau did not seek to repent of his own sin. He was not interested in changing his own mind. Let me add, Esau did not sin here. He had nothing to repent about. He was not seeking to repent of something he did. He was seeking to change his father's mind about the blessing. But Isaac said he could not change his mind on this matter. It was too late. It was done. Where Esau went wrong was years earlier when he sold his birthright for some food.

C. *How Is Repentance Brought About?*

Let me take up one more question that I have pondered. It is this: How is repentance brought about? I know of a church that has committed the biggest sin I have ever seen a church commit in almost 50 years of church experience. And not only do they not think they did anything wrong, they think they did right! If that can be true of a church, that can most certainly be true of any individual. And if that is so, how can such a church or such a person be brought to repentance?

Go with me to John 8. You see, there is something that must happen before repentance takes place and it is conviction of sin. This comes through truth about one's actions being revealed to the mind. We begin in verse 1:

1 *But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*

2 *Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.*

3 *Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,*

4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.

5 "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

The verb tenses here indicate that while they are talking Jesus is writing. If you had been there you would have thought He is not listening, but is absorbed in what He is writing. What did He write? Maybe He was writing the commandments.

Verse 7:

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

I expect that there on the ground was a message that bared the hearts of this woman's accusers.

9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

What an enlightening verse is this! Those who heard what it. Heard what? Heard that the one who was without sin should throw the first stone! Maybe they saw their own sin spelled out on the ground and then heard what Jesus said. And when that happened something most crucial happened that must happen before repentance takes place. They were convicted.

What is conviction of sin? When one is convicted one is being reprovved in the mind that a certain shameful thing is true of oneself. Something says in one's mind, "That is true of you. You did thus and such. Oh how

shameful that is. You know it's true." And how does this message come to one? Well, verse 9 says it is the conscience that tells one. And what is the conscience? It is a co-knowledge. A knowledge alongside one's own knowledge that keeps track of right and wrong. And here it is saying, "Look at what Jesus wrote on the ground. You know that is true of you. That is shameful. How dare you accuse this woman when you have all this sin hidden in your own heart? Oh, but you are a shameful person."

And what happened? All the accusers left one by one. You could tell what order their ages were because the oldest went first and so on. And why was that? Because there was sin stored up according to age. If you want to know what the scribes and Pharisees were like, that is the religious leaders of the day, read Matthew 23. They were sick inside. They were full of sin but on the outside they appeared to be very spiritual and godly. You would never know how much muck and mud and dirt was inside, by the beautiful clothing they covered themselves with.

10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

How is repentance brought about? By exposure of sin! You will notice that no scribes or Pharisees stuck around. Conviction slew every one of them. That is how it is with church leaders. It takes 10 times more conviction to get leaders to repent than it takes for those in the pew.

Let me give an illustration from Jonathan Goforth, missionary to China many years ago. He went to a church in one area and he gives this account in his book called, "By My Spirit." He writes:

"After the evening of the third day, a few of us missionaries were conversing together. 'I can't understand how it is,' said one, 'that our Chinese leaders are so silent these days. So far all the praying has been done by the ordinary church members. In the prayer meetings that were held before Mr. Goforth came the leaders didn't hold back at all. Why, then, should they be so silent now?' 'I think you can count upon it,' I said, 'that there is a hindrance among your leaders. It is sin that makes them dumb.' Immediately one of the lady missionaries took me up. 'Oh, come now, Mr. Goforth,' she said, 'you surely don't expect us to believe that there are such sinners among our leaders as there were at Mukden and Lianoyang. Why, we would be ashamed of ourselves if there were.'

"On the fourth day we began the afternoon meeting about four o'clock. Following my address the same deep intensity in prayer became evident. After prayer had continued for about half an hour a strange thing happened. More than half the congregation went down on their knees. Strange, I say, because it was a Presbyterian Church, and the people had always been accustomed to stand while praying. Feeling, however, that it was the direction of the Spirit, I intimated that they might all go down on their knees if they wished - and they did.

"Then an elder stood up and said to another elder, who was seated on the platform: 'In the session meetings it was always my bad temper that was the cause of trouble. Please forgive me.' And the elder who was thus addressed cried back: 'Please don't say any more. I'm just as much at fault as you are. It's you who should forgive me.'

A few minutes of silence followed, and then a man rose from his knees and in a clear voice, though he was bordering on tears, began to pray. For several days I had been taking note of the man, although I did not know who he was. He had a strong, intelligent face,

upon which anxiety was plainly written. 'O God,' he cried, 'you know what my position is - a preacher. When I came to these meetings I determined that, come what would, I would keep my sins covered up. I knew that if I confessed my sins it would bring disgrace not only upon myself but upon my family and my church. But I can't keep it hidden any longer. I have committed adultery... But that is not all. In one of the out-stations a deacon committed a horrible sin which hindered Thy cause. My plain duty was to report the affair to the missionary, but the deacon bought me a fur garment, and I accepted it and it sealed my lips. But I can't wear it any longer." With that he tore off the garment and flung it from him as it had been a plague. Then he continued to pray with glowing intensity until the whole audience was swept as by fire. Even the smallest children began to cry out for mercy. The meeting did not break up until ten o'clock that night, having lasted a full six hours" (35-36).

CONCL: In conclusion I ask, is repentance a gift? Think of this man's testimony I just read. Think of the covered sin. Then think that by repentance and confession, his sins were washed away by the blood of Christ. He was freely forgiven. Is that not a gift?

Then I ask, can some not repent? Are some, or most reprobated by God and God refuses to give them repentance? No! A thousand times, No! Why do many not repent, even Christians, even preachers? Pride! How is repentance brought about? How is a person bound in pride finally released? Conviction must be brought to bear to such an extent that the sinner breaks under the crushing load of guilt and shame. And when that sinner is a church leader, God will sometimes not let them go free until they publically confess. That holds true for some others as well.

Oh, repentance! What a wonderful gift! To be freely forgiven, what a blessing from God! And it is available to all, both Jews and Gentiles!