

It's Not Too Late!

Bill Brinkworth

Psalm 137 is a sad hymn that Israel sang. The time referred to in this song was when God's people had been captured (Psalm 137:1-3) by the Babylonians and taken to a foreign land.

There, Israel found themselves slaves to their captives. Their freedom was lost because of their sin (Lamentations 1:8). They found themselves surrounded by godless people and all Israel could remember was what it was like in Jerusalem. Their beloved Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed.

Israel pined for their freedom and their country. They remembered how it was before captivity left them grief-stricken.

In the past, they and Jerusalem were known for joyous singing and happiness. In their bondage, they could not (Psalm 137:4) utter a note when requested to sing. Their hearts were broken, and their spirits were crushed.

Too many today find themselves with a similar sadness. They remember their joy and good times before reaping the consequences of their sin. When their memories drift back to those joyous days, they, too, are not

happy. It is heartbreaking to think about what one's life could have been without involvement in iniquity.

The captive Israelites must have constantly pondered, "It's too late!" Maybe they shook their heads in despair, thinking, "There is no taking back what we have done. We have sown sin and are now reaping its terrible consequences." Today's sinners also will one day have similar regrets.

There is no way to take back what was done, that is why it is so important to stay away from sin. Unfortunately, most have to live with iniquity's consequences, but they can go forward without making the same mistakes.

A repentant, regretting heart can decide to start over. Seeking God's forgiveness and help can give one a second (or third, or fourth...) chance.

Moping about "spilled beans" will not clean up the mess sin made. God is a forgiving God. There may still be a sinful crop that one will reap from the seeds sown by iniquity, but with God's help, one can still go forward.

Seek God's forgiveness and His help. There is hope!

***"The greatest
griefs are those
we cause
ourselves."***

— Sophocles

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A Changed Heart

Bill Brinkworth

Repentance is the "... pain, regret, or affliction which a person feels on account of his past conduct..." (Noah Webster, 1828). This sorrowful attitude over one's sins was a vital part of John the Baptist's ministry and is essential today when one is saved from the eternal wages of one's iniquities.



Although a repentant person will usually change their behavior, just changing conduct alone will not save anyone. If a lifestyle change were necessary for salvation, those acts would be good work, and no good deed can save anyone from the eternal wages of sin (Ephesians 2:8-9).

John, the Baptist, illustrated that a broken heart over sin would produce a better life when he spoke to four types of people:

❖ To the religious but not righteous, John told them that if they

were convicted over their sins, they would prove it by a lifestyle that would show "fruits" from their inward changes. Their changed heart would change how they lived, and others could see what the changes had done in their life (Luke 3:8).

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Repentance

Homilies of the English Church.

Repentance is a true turning or returning unto God. People forsake their idolatry and wickedness with a stronger faith and embrace, love, and worship only the true, living God. They give themselves to good works and changed behavior, which, according to God's Word, they know to be acceptable unto Him.

The four parts of repentance are contrition, confession, faith, and amendment of life's wrongdoings. They may be likened to an easy and short ladder. From that "ladder," one may mentally climb from gut-wrenching guilt to the castle where the Lord is pleased.

A Changed Heart

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❖ To the common people, he told them that a giving attitude would show a changed heart (Luke 3:11). John must have known that they were covetous of the things of this world and that they were not trusting God daily for their needs.

❖ To the publicans, he also said there would need to be some changes in their lives. Publicans were notoriously dishonest tax collectors. John told them their spiritual remodeling should include honesty (Luke 3:13).

❖ To soldiers, he did not tell them to quit the army. He told them their change of heart would include halting unnecessary violence, lying, and dissatisfaction with their salaries.

A changed, repentant heart is proof of one's salvation. The areas John said should change in lives over 2,000 years ago should still change today when one's life is altered by salvation. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

II Corinthians 5:17

A Broken Heart

Spurgeon

What man can stand against his children's tears? When King Henry II was provoked to take up arms against his ungrateful

"Sin and Hell are married unless repentance proclaims the divorce."

— Spurgeon

and rebellious son, he cornered his son in a French town.

The son, near death, desired to see his father and confess his wrongdoing, but the stern older man refused to look the rebel in the face. His offspring was sorely troubled in his conscience and said to those about him, "I am dying; take me from my bed, and let me lie in sackcloth and ashes, in token of my sorrow for my ingratitude to my father." Then he died.

When the tidings came to the older man that his boy had died in ashes and was repentant for his rebellion, the man threw himself upon the earth. Like King David, he cried, "Would God I had died for him." The thought of his boy's broken heart touched the father's heart.

If ye, being evil, are overcome by your children's tears

"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

Psalms 34:18

"Contrite": Full of guilt and remorse for a wrongdoing or sin

and grief, how much more shall your Father who is in Heaven find your moanings and confessions an argument for the display of His pardoning love through Christ Jesus our Lord? This is the eloquence which God delights in: the broken heart and the contrite spirit.

"Stop Now!"

Tillmage

Some young men were ice-skating on a pond around an half-melted spot in the ice some years ago near Princeton, New Jersey. As they neared the dangerous place, the ice began to break.

Most of the skaters stopped. However, one young man said, "I am not afraid. I will skate around it one more time." He almost was able to glide entirely around it, but the ice broke, and he fell in. Not until the next day was his lifeless body found.

Similarly, people often get too close to sin. They were warned, but they were determined to do it "one more time." That last willing iniquity may be their permanent downfall.

Do not risk one more attempt at ignoring



God's sent conviction not to commit that sin any longer. Stop now! He can deliver us from the foolhardiness and temptation of doing wrong "just one more time."

Verses on "Repentance"

- ◆ *"And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2*
- ◆ *"And they went out, and preached that men should repent." Mark 6:12*
- ◆ *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;" Acts 3:19*
- ◆ *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:" Acts 17:30*
- ◆ *"But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Acts 26:20*

***"When the soul has laid down its faults at the feet of God, it feels as though it had wings."* — Guerin**