

FOUNDATION
Repentance: Fake and False
1 Samuel 15:12-26

1 Samuel 15:12-26~ ¹² And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, “Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal.” ¹³ And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, “Blessed be you to the LORD. I have performed the commandment of the LORD.” ¹⁴ And Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?” ¹⁵ Saul said, “They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction.” ¹⁶ Then Samuel said to Saul, “Stop! I will tell you what the LORD said to me this night.” And he said to him, “Speak.”

¹⁷ And Samuel said, “Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. ¹⁸ And the LORD sent you on a mission and said, ‘Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.’ ¹⁹ Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?” ²⁰ And Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. ²¹ But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.” ²² And Samuel said,

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
as in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to listen than the fat of rams.

²³ For rebellion is as the sin of divination,
and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has also rejected you from being king.”

²⁴ Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. ²⁵ Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the LORD.” ²⁶ And Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

I. Introduction

Good morning, Brothers and Sisters. If you can please turn with me in your Bible to Hebrews 6, which is our main Scripture text for this series on FOUNDATION, we can read the passage together. Someone once said that repetition is the main tool of a teacher, so we are going to re-read this text from Hebrews 6, verses 1-3 again so that it can solidify in our mind. And as we read, note the six materials that are needed to build a firm foundation.

Hebrews 6:1-3~

¹ Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of ^[1] repentance from dead works and of ^[2] faith toward God, ² and of instruction about ^[3] washings, the ^[4] laying on of hands, the ^[5] resurrection of the dead, and ^[6] eternal judgment.

³ And this we will do if God permits.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

II. Marks of True Repentance

The first of the basic foundation that launches us on our journey to a forgiven life is repentance. This is where it all starts. And last week, we look at the marks of true repentance ... namely, three components that make our repentance sincere and true. All three components must be present for repentance to avail itself to God.

1. First, a change of Mind (*metanoia*).

We change the way we think about ourselves and about our God ... that we have been living for ourselves instead of for God. It is a change of mind that our life is about us.

2. Second, a change of Emotion (*nacham*).

There is remorse ... a sorrowfulness that we feel. Not that we feel sorry for ourselves, per se. Remember, it is not about us. We feel sorry and remorseful that we have sin against the Father. We have robbed Him.

3. Third, a change of Will (*shoob*).

We willfully change our direction. We turn around and return back to the Father on the basis of what Jesus has done on the cross some two thousand years ago.

Now, the best illustration of true repentance is found in Luke 15 in a parable that Jesus told. It is known as the Prodigal Son. It is a wonderful passage that illustrates the three marks of true repentance.

I chuckle silently when I turn to this passage known as the Prodigal Son ... a passage that talks about repentance. Just a side note for fun to see if you ever thought about this (or maybe it is just me).

The title of this parable known as the Prodigal Son, or the Wayward and Wasteful Son, is a title that is coined by theologians and scholars. Jesus did not title this parable, the Prodigal Son. It is us who coined this title. The title of this parable, the Prodigal Son, puts the focus on who? On the son, right? It is about the prodigal son. It is about the wayward and wasteful son. It is about a son who left his father, faced trouble, and returned back to his father. When we read the parable, that is who we think about, right? We think about what the son lost. But really, the story is not about the sinful son, but about the faithful father. It is NOT about what the son has lost. It is about what the Father has lost. The focus is on the Father. (Remember that sin is the focus on Self and not on the God).

In Luke 15, Jesus told three parables back to back. It is about a shepherd who lost his sheep (Luke 15:3-7), a woman who lost a coin (Luke 15:8-10), and a father who lost a son (Luke 15:11-32). And at the end of each parable is the refrain that there is joy and rejoice over that which was lost, but now found.

You know the story.

1. First, the son rebels against his father.

He no longer wants to live under the Father's rule nor does he want to live in the Father's household. "Give me my inheritance," he tells his father (Luke 15:12). He thinks that there is more joy and excitement living with the heathens than with the Father.

And there are many, many people who feel that way. They think that Christians are boring and the Christian life is stiff. Nothing can be more further from the truth. The Christian journey is the greatest joy. And living with the Father has no words to describe it. But the son has to find that out for himself. So he rebels against his father.

2. Second, the son left his father for "loose living".

So that is what he does. Verse 13 says that he gathers everything that is his and goes to a distant country (that is to the Gentiles) where he can live "recklessly". I just love the way the NASB translates it ... "he squandered his estate with *loose living*" (emphasis is mine). I don't know why, but I just like the way that sounds ... "he squandered his estate with *loose living*." Verse 14 says that he spends everything he has on loose living.

We are not told what "loose living" is. Maybe that is intentional on Jesus' part. He leaves it ambiguous because "loose living" is different for different people.

3. Third, the son faces consequences of his action.

But the sobering reality is that our sins will find us out. The book of Galatians says:

Galatians 6:7-8~⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

And also in the book of Numbers, Moses warns the children of Israel not to sin against God because their sin will one day find them out.

Numbers 32:23~ ²³ But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.

Back to Luke 15 and the Prodigal Son. The son may enjoy his loose living for awhile. And let us just be honest with each other, there is some sense of stimulation sinning against God. Otherwise we would not have done it. But, his loose living catches us with him. Verse 16 says that ...

- He works hard just to survive.
- He is hungry and does not have enough to eat
- So he fills his stomach with swine sobs
- No one is there to help him and lend him a hand

His sin found him out. He is reaping what he has been sowing. The son has fun for awhile with his loose living. But now he is paying the price.

And maybe some of you are paying the price of your “loose living”, whatever that may be. Maybe you thought you can get away with it, but the consequences of your action have caught up with you. But there is hope for you like there is hope for the son.

4. Fourth, the son repents and returns to the Father

What the son is going through is a sad thing. It is a sad, sad story until we come to verse 17. Now, you should underline this in your Bible. Verse 17 ...

Luke 15:17~ ¹⁷ “But when he came to himself ...

I just love the way the NASB translates it:

Luke 15:17~ ¹⁷ But when he came to his senses ...(NASB)

And please notice in verse 17 and following, the three components of repentance.

- a. First, he changes his mind about the Father and about himself.

He realizes how good the Father is.

Luke 15:17~ ¹⁷ ... he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!’

He once left the Father's household because he thought the Father was stifling him. But now he realizes how good and benevolent his Father is, even to the least in his Father's household.

He also changes his mind about himself.

Luke 15:18~¹⁸ 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight (NASB)

He realizes that he was living for himself ... for his own wanton pleasure. The things he did, he did them for himself.

There is no blaming of the Father. The son does not say, "What did the Father allow this to happen to me? Why did the Father let me do these things?" No. The son acknowledges that his mistakes are his own. His mistakes are the result of his self focus instead of the Father focus.

As funny as that sounds, I do know people who think this way. They make decision and live for themselves. Then their wrongful decision catches up with them where they are experiencing the due punishment of their action. Then instead of repenting and recognizing that it is because of their self focus, they blame God. "Why did God allow this to happen to me? God could have stopped it if He wanted to. But obviously He did not. So why did He allow this to happen?" It is weird but there are people who think this way. They cannot take responsibility for their own action.

But that is not so with the son. He changes his mind about himself. It is he who has gone astrayed.

- b. Second, he changes his feelings about himself.

There is an emotion response. You see that in verse 19?

Luke 15:19~¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."

True repentance does not expect anything in return. He does not demand his right as a son. He does not go to the Father and says, "Well, now that I have repented, You need to: 1) forgive me, and 2) give me the all the benefits of a son again."

But that is what some people do and teach. We come to the Father demanding things from Him. We demand health and wealth from Him. We demand a good future from Him ... come to Jesus and he will give you a good career. We demand a big and spectacular ministry to stroke our ego.

And then we turn around and demand things from our brothers and sisters in Christ. You need to forgive me. You need to give to me. Are you a Christian? Then you need to serve me.

You see, demanding things from the Father is what the prodigal son did in the beginning of the parable. “Give me my inheritance.” But when we repent and return to the Father, we do not demand things. We humbly and joyfully live with the Father under His house and under His authority.

There is so much to be said about this, but we have to move on.

- c. Third, he changes direction.

The last step ... the Bible says in verse 20:

Luke 15:20~²⁰ So he got up and came to his father. (NASB)

The son returns to the Father. The son returns home. He changes his direction. He changes the way he has been living (for himself) and returns back to the Father and submits himself under the Father’s authority.

This parable beautifully illustrates what true repentance looks like. We have to have three things. But just as there is true repentance, there is false repentance.

III. Marks of Fake and False Repentance

With the few minutes I have left, I would like for us to take a look at false repentance that masquerades itself as true repentance. The best story that illustrates this is King Saul in 1 Samuel 15.

Now, Samuel, the prophet, had told Saul that God wanted Saul to go and wipe out the Amalekites. God’s instruction was clear.

1 Samuel 15:2-3~² Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. **3** Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’ ”

So Saul went out and fought the Amalekites and God gave Saul the victory. While Saul did “utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword” (1 Samuel 15:8), verse 9 states that:

1 Samuel 15:9~⁹ But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.

All that was worthless, Saul destroyed. But he kept the best of the flock, livestock, and people. And so Samuel, the prophet, confronted Saul of his disobedience. Saul did repent, mind you, but it was not true repentance. And God knew it.

There are five marks of a fake and false repentance.

1. First, Saul Covered his disobedience. (1 Samuel 15:13, 20)

We see this in verse 13 and 20.

1 Samuel 15:13~ ¹³ Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, “Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD.”

1 Samuel 15:20~ ²⁰ Then Saul said to Samuel, “I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me,

Saul tried to cover up his disobedience by pointing to things that he did obey God.

“I did go on the mission that God told to go. I did mop up those detestable people and those despised things. I did obey God.”

But you see, partial obedience is really disobedience. We all make mistakes. And the honest truth is that sometimes the cover ups are worse than the actual sins themselves. We want to focus on what we did right instead of what we failed. But God hold us accountable for what we did wrong.

I often think about some of the arguments I had with my wife. Sometimes we talk pass each other. She focused on what I did wrong, and I focused on what I did right.

Let’s not be too hard on King Saul, here. We do that ourselves. We are so quick to defend ourselves. When someone points out our error, our first response is to defend ourselves. And then we feign being offended. We sometimes get too easily offended. And at times, it is a masquerade to cover our sins.

But of course, that did not work with Samuel. He saw right through that. So, Saul came up with a second response of false repentance.

2. Second, Saul Blamed others. (1 Samuel 15:21, 24)

1 Samuel 15:21~ ²¹ But the people took *some* of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction ...

“I did not do it,” Saul excused himself. “It was the people. They took the spoils.”

But aren’t they your people? Are you not the king? This is one of the most effective excuses for not repenting because it is true. When a sin is committed, it usually involves

a number of people. Many sins that we commit are because of someone tempting us. Sins are not committed in a vacuum. But the question is, “What does that have to do with us repenting?” Nothing. It has something to do with why we sin, but nothing to do with us needing to repent of those sins.

And instead of looking at what we did wrong, we want to focus on what others did wrong. We are a master at find faults with others and failing to see our own faults.

And if we cannot blame it on people, we blame it on hormones. “It is that time of the month.” Or, “hey, it’s a guy thing.” Or, “I am built that way.”

3. Third, Saul Justified his disobedience. (1 Samuel 15:21)

1 Samuel 15:21~ ²¹ But the people took *some* of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”

“We are doing this for the Lord! We are saving the best of the flock so we can give the best to God.”

We can spin any sins to make it sounds good. One of my youth long ago told me that he loves looking and beautiful girls because they make him praise God. Okay, buddy. Got you.

4. Fourth, Saul Played the Victim. (1 Samuel 15:24)

1 Samuel 15:24~ ²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice.

We are not villain; we are the victim. You should not feel angry with me; you should feel pity for me. “I was afraid of the people, so I listened to their voice.”

This is modern counseling at work. We go to seek counselor to tell us that what we did wrong is because of what someone did to us. We are the victim. It is not our fault. It was our parents’ fault. We are victim because we did not receive love when we are young. That is why we behave the way we behave.

5. Fifth, Saul Manipulated his confession. (1 Samuel 15:24-25, 30)

1 Samuel 15:24~ ²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. ²⁵ Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the LORD” ... ³⁰ Then he said, “I have sinned; *but* please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God.”

Saul confessed, but without conviction. His repentance was a form of manipulation. He wanted Samuel to go back with him so that he may be honor before the elders and before the people of Israel.

I will say the words just so that you can do what I want you to do. Sometimes we do that in an argument. We just say that we are sorry just to end the argument, but we really do not mean it. How do I know? Because we do change. I mean, why change we do did not do anything wrong, right?

IV. Conclusion

So there are at least five marks of fake and false repentance.

1. We cover our disobedience.
2. We blame others for our disobedience.
3. We justify our disobedience.
4. We played the victim for our disobedience.
5. We manipulate in our confession.

V. The Blessing

Presider: May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. May the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be unto you.

Congregation: And also to you.