

Gideon and the Danger of Success Part 1

The Joy of Repentance

Judges 6:1-10

Judges


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“It is not your business to succeed, but to do right: when you have done so, the rest lies with God. In the midst of our triumphs, let us cry to God for humility.”

C.H. SPURGEON

- LADIES – SIGN UP FOR LADIES FELLOWSHIP ON FRIDAY
- MEN-SIGN UP FOR PRAYER BREAKFAST ON SATURDAY

 Open your Bible to **Judges 6**. We are continuing in a series the book of Judges. This evening we are looking a message entitled: “The Danger of Success.”¹ Someone once said, “The two hardest things to handle in life are failure and success.”

Israel is living in the land God promised, but alongside people who worship false gods, because they didn’t fully trust God and so didn’t fully obey Him. One way you know you are fully trusting God is you are fully submitted to obeying Him.

God’s people rejected the Lord and served other gods; He allowed their enemies to oppress them; He rescued them through His judges, Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, and Barak.

Of all the accounts of deliverance in the Book of Judges, none is more complete nor complex than the story of Gideon. It is evident even from a casual reading that the account divides into two major parts, the actual account of Israel’s deliverance from the Midianite oppression under the leadership of Gideon (6:1–8:35) and the story of his son Abimelech (9:1–57).²

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I. **Awakening to Repentance (6:1-6).**

Judges 6:1, “The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years.”

God’s Chastening Hand

¹ Some of the ideas and material in this message is directly from Timothy Keller, *Judges For You* (God’s Word For You) The Good Book Company.

² Block, D. I. (1999). *Judges, Ruth* (Vol. 6, p. 247). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

The children of Israel disobeyed, and God would send His most severe chastening yet. This time, God “gave them into the hands of the Midianites” (v 1). It is the worst oppression yet—Israelites are forced to leave their homes and “[prepare] shelters for themselves” in the inaccessible mountain ranges (v 2). The Midianites were not interested in political control but rather economic exploitation, plundering the land of its crops (v 3). They “laid waste the land” (v 5)—the people were starving and the land was ravaged (v 4, “They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey.”). Eventually, “Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD.” (v 6).

II. A **Sermon** Before a Savior (6:7-10).

Now we expect God to raise up a deliverer, a judge (as in 3:9, 15; 4:4, 6-7). But instead, “When the people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites, 8 the LORD sent a prophet to the people of Israel.” (6:7-8). God’s first response to the people’s cry is not to send a savior or salvation, but to give them a sermon! Before they can appreciate the rescue that will come, the people need to understand why they need rescuing. The prophet comes and helps them to understand why they are in the trouble they are in. He wants them to understand where their idolatry—their sin—has led them.

The nature of the sermon shows that God is trying to convict the people so that they will be truly repentant—which suggests that the “crying out” of verses 6-7 is not a sign of real repentance. Their history, after the deaths of Othniel, Ehud and Deborah, is strong evidence that their sorrow was skin-deep, not heartfelt. So God reminds them of two things: what he has done, and what they have done. What has he done?

Judges 6:8b-10a, “And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. 9 And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. 10 And I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.’”

And we find what God’s people did: “But you have not obeyed my voice” (vs. 10b).

III. The **Difference** between Repentance and Regret (6:10).

Regret & Repentance

Regret and repentance are not the same thing. Consider the contrast in 2 Corinthians 7:10–11. Paul contrasts true repentance and worldly regret: “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.”

Regret is sorrow over the consequences of sin, not the sin itself. Regret focuses on me., on what I have lost, how my heart is breaking. Repentance is about turning back to God; it is

God centered. True godly repentance considers how God has been grieved and His holiness violated, not receiving the honor He deserves.

Regret stays sad and bitter – it is completely self-centered. Repentance isn't like this, because with true repentance comes total restoration with God.

The Eight Qualities of Godly Sorrow

1 – Forsaking sin *completely*, “repentance...without regret”

Godly repentance is a “repentance that leads to salvation **without regret**”. There is no regret from being totally delivered from the sin. There is a desire to get rid of the sin completely.

2 – Forsaking sin *immediately*, “what earnestness”

Godly repentance doesn't play around with sin and make excuses to deal with it another day. Paul observed this in the Corinthians when he said, “see what **earnestness** this godly grief has produced in you”. There was a sincere and urgent desire to be radically in getting rid of the sin immediately.

3 – Confessing of sin / coming clean, “what eagerness to clear yourselves”

Godly repentance produces and “**eagerness to clear**” yourself by taking complete responsibility for sin. It's not my parent's fault, not my spouse's fault (if married), not because I'm Irish or African or Asian. It's not because I was abused or maltreated or hurt. My sin is my responsibility. I own it. It is a disgrace to God and no one made me do it. I chose to sin against the beauty and holiness of God. David did not duck responsibility for his sin. He cried, “I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.” (Ps. 51:3, KJV).

4 – Hatred for sin because it violates God's glory, “what indignation”

Godly repentance brings an “**indignation**” or hatred toward sin because God's glory has been violated. It is not just bad because it affects me, but it is an insult to God's holiness.

5 – The fear of God and His holiness, “what fear”

Godly repentance brings a deep **fear** of God and a profound realization of His presence and nearness. With the Holy One being so near to such a sinful creature, there is a very real fear of God that builds and takes hold of the heart. Isaiah confessed, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isa. 6:5). “David cried out to God, “Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me”

6 – The vehement desire for restoration, “what longing”

Godly repentance brings a profound **longing** to be restored to an intimate relationship with God. David said, “Restore to me the joy of your salvation” and “renew a right spirit

within me” (Ps. 51:12, 10). There is a fear in cleaning up the mess of sin, but the desire to enjoy intimacy with God far outweighs the fear. Restoration may entail making things right with others by confessing, making restitution (if something was taken), asking for forgiveness. This can be debilitating to think about, but there must be a sincere willingness to do whatever it takes to make things right before intimacy with God is restored.

7 – The enthusiastic desire to please God, “what zeal”

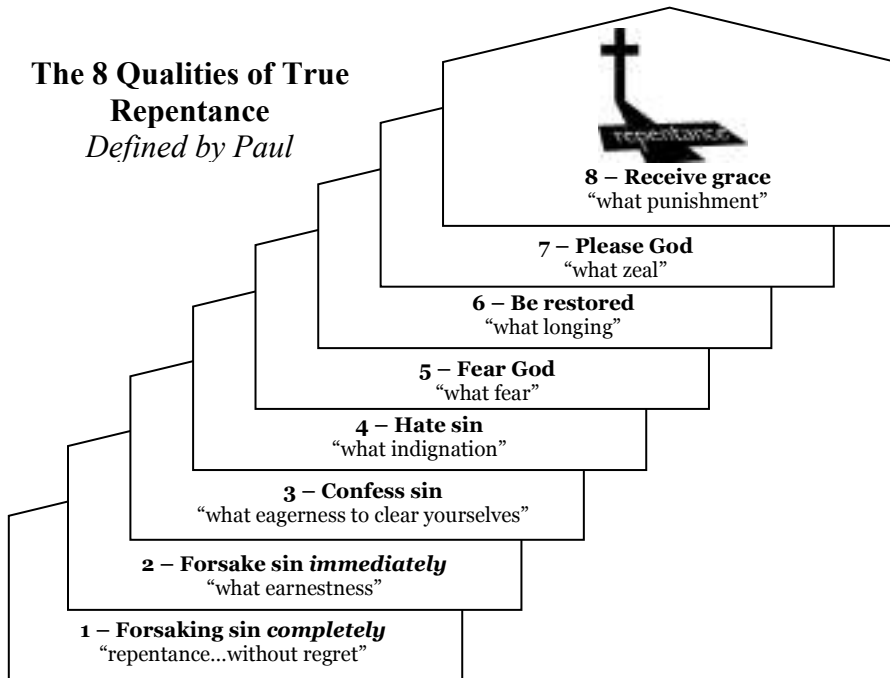
Godly repentance brings a **zeal** and enthusiasm to do whatever it takes to please God. David said, “Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you” and “my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness” (Ps. 51:13, 14)

8 – The realization that God’s grace is costly, “what punishment”

Godly repentance brings a shocking realization of God’s mercy that allows us to avert God’s wrath.

Repentance Illustrated

Paul define godly grief in his second letter to the Corinthians.



Revealing Idolatry

You want to know an area of sin in your life? Do the idol test. What makes you really mad when you don’t have it?

After real repentance and restoration to God, we do not hate ourselves, and we do not hate our lives. When someone is inconsolable, it means they have made something besides God their real god and savior (eg: money, friends, career, family). It is an idol, and its loss is therefore impossible to heal without repudiating it as an idol. Regret is all about “us”: how I am being hurt, how my life is ruined, how my heart is breaking; but repentance is all about God: how he has

been grieved, how his nature as Creator and Redeemer is being trampled on, how his repeated saving actions are being trivialized and used manipulatively.

We know the people of Israel are idolaters. God's response to their crying shows that they are regretful for what they have lost, and want it restored; but they are not repenting of their idolatry. God's aim in sending them his prophet is to move them beyond regret to repentance.

Conclusion / Application

- We have to listen to God's word. It is interesting that the people cried out for some dramatic miracle, and God sent them a sermon—an exposition of the word of God. There is no getting around the study of the Bible. That is where we learn who we are; that is the means through which God brings spiritual renewal in our lives.
- We need to discern in ourselves the difference between the normal lapses on the road to increasing Christian maturity and getting “stuck”—a repeated pattern of lapses which is a sign of no real progress. If you are continually falling into the same spiritual pit, and your falls are not decreasing in numbers or intensity, then you may be responding in regret rather than repentance.
- We often lack perspective and need godly friends to speak into our lives. Many people who are making progress feel they are not, and many people who are not making progress are in denial about it. This is why we need several strong Christian friends and Christian leaders who can help us tell the difference.