

What Does it Look Like to Repent?
Luke 1:56-80
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And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. - Luke 1:63-64, ESV

When you fail and God disciplines you, how do you respond?

Yesterday, we looked at Zechariah's doubt and saw that his was sinful because he doubted God's truthfulness. We saw that Gabriel rebuke him and God discipline him by making him unable to speak until after John's birth. Today, we see Zechariah restored gloriously and, in being restored, he gives us a model of true repentance.

As followers of Jesus, we need to know how to repent well. Because we sin daily, in ways we don't even realize, the words of Martin Luther echo truth to us 500 years later, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Mt 4:17), He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." So, how can we follow Zechariah's example and repent well?

First of all, notice what Zechariah does not do:

- 1. He does not complain about the consequence God gives.** If I had been unable to speak for over 10 months, I might be tempted to complain. Zechariah does not. Whatever discipline or consequence God gives, we know it is much less than our sins deserve. Christ took the true punishment on Himself on the cross, and whatever consequence God gives us is for our good and very limited.
- 2. He does not blame anyone else for his sin.** Zechariah doesn't look for someone to blame, to escape responsibility.
- 3. He does not dwell on his sin at all.** Zechariah does not try to explain why he questioned Gabriel or why he was disciplined.

Instead, consider what he did do:

- 1. Zechariah obeys God.** God has told him to name his son John. Even though no one in his family had that name and it made no sense to his neighbors and peers, Zechariah obeyed God and named his son John, as he was commanded. Obedience is an essential part of repentance. The desire and ability to obey both belong to God, so even in our obedience, we must be careful to do what Zechariah did next:
- 2. Zechariah praised God.** Once his tongue was loosened, Zechariah immediately glorified God. Our obedience is true obedience if we glorify God. If we're seeking to exalt ourselves or prove ourselves righteous, we have missed the point. Glorifying God alone is the fruit of repentance.
- 3. Zechariah spoke the truth of God, declaring His deeds and proclaiming His Gospel.** Zechariah's wonderful speech in vv. 67-79 is a beautiful proclamation of the saving activity of God. It is Gospel preaching at its finest - covenantal, biblical, God-centered, worshipful.

So, when God disciplines us for our sin, we must accept the consequences and be thankful, never seek to pass the blame or dwell on our sin, but obey God, praise Him and speak forth His Gospel truth. This is the rhythm of the Christian life: repent, believe, obey, proclaim.

Because of the finished work of Jesus, we are given the gift of being able to do this, rather than having to wallow in our sin, despair of our future and feel sorry for ourselves. Praise God from Whom all blessing flow, including the grace of repentance!