

Series: Isaiah

Lesson # 22

Title: Why No Repentance?

Scripture: Isaiah 9: 8-21; 10: 1-4

Date: 2-8-09

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

Next time you hear of a hurricane approaching the shore of New Jersey go out to meet it face-to-face. Stand at the edge of the Atlantic and blow against its force with the breath of your mouth to try and stop it.

Sound foolish?

That is exactly what you are doing every day that you continue in your rebellion against God.

The Lord has sent his word to you. You have heard.

- You have heard the Lord's sure promise of mercy to those who take sides with God against themselves--who confess (who agree with God) that they are sinners who can not save themselves and who place all their trust in Christ alone.
- You have heard the Lord's sure promise of judgment, of eternal separation and everlasting torment to those who are foolish enough to stand on the shore and blow against the hurricane.
- You have beheld the judgment of God all around you--in the world, in our nation, through wars, through storms on the seas, through economic storms--still you have not turned away from yourself to God. Why is that?

It is because you desperately need God's mercy! You desperately need God to break your heart of stone and to reveal Christ in you or else you will never repent and turn to him.

Proposition: God's promise of judgment--not even the judgment of hell itself--will make a sinner repent. Only the grace and power of God can turn you from yourself to him.

I tell you this because it is through this word that the Lord works grace in the hearts of his people. Through the word that declares your absolute utter inability, the Lord alone in power can bring you to see yourself as small and useless as the one standing on the shore blowing against the hurricane. But when he calms the storm by turning you to Christ, then you shall be turned indeed.

It is my prayer this morning that he might cause you to see your need of him so that you cry out for mercy in true God-wrought repentance.

Isaiah 9: 8: The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.

Just as the Lord has sent his word to you, the Lord sent his word into the nation of Israel. Not just for a moment, but "*it hath lighted upon Israel.*"

Year after year, prophet after prophet, the Lord continually declared what he would bring to pass and then did it. **Matthew 24:35: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.** Yet, the whole nation, not just one person, but the entire nation, all joined together to say, 'No God!'

The Lord sent judgment into Israel.

1. The Lord sent the Assyrians, the Syrians, and the Philistines who waged war and destroyed the land; yet they repented not (v11-12.)
2. The Lord cut off their civil and religious leaders, the whole nation, in one day; yet they repented not (v14-17.)
3. The Lord sent darkness through all the land--darkness of every kind--moral darkness, political darkness, economic darkness, and spiritual darkness; yet they repented not (9:18-21).
4. The Lord sent desolation after desolation upon Israel and reasoned with them; yet they repented not (10:1-4.)

Four times we read of his hand of judgment, "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (9:12, 17, 21; 10:4). Why?

Verse 13: For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts.

Why? After hearing the word of God's grace and after beholding the judgment of God, why would they not repent and seek the LORD of hosts? (10: 4)

Without God sanctifying his word to our hearts, not even the wrath of hell will make us repent and believe God.

Illustration: THE LITTLE BLACK BOX

We like to find the source of a problem. Why will you not believe God?

Isaiah 9: 9: And all the people shall know, *even* Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart,

I. First, God must bring us to repentance because we have a heart problem.

1. Look at how the Holy Spirit describes the heart. Proud. Stout.

Jeremiah 17:9: The heart is deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Genesis 6:5: And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

Ecclesiastes 9: 3:...yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness *is* in their heart while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead.

So the first reason, God must work in us in power and grace to bring us to repentance is because of the heart--the little black box.

II. Second, reason God must work repentance in us is that we do not know how to seek the Lord.

Isaiah 9: 9: [They] say in the pride and stoutness of heart, 10: The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change *them into* cedars.

Who said this? This was the message of their most respected leaders--religious and civil--and so this is what the people believed and professed. Look down to verse 15: **The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. 16: For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err; and *they that are* led of them *are* destroyed.**

A. Isaiah came preaching:

- "Sherjazzub"--God has an elect remnant whom he shall save. Repent from your ways and believe on Christ.
- "Immanuel"--God is with us, Christ is coming, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. If you will not believe you shall not be established!
- "Mahershallahazbaz"--in making speed to the spoil he hasteneth the prey--don't make a covenant with this people--Sanctify the LORD of hosts, fear the Lord, he shall be for a sanctuary--and shall cut off all your enemies.

B. But their ancient and honorable, their prophets, said:

1. *The bricks are fallen down*--their houses were destroyed all around them by the enemy and they saw that. They saw the judgment of God.

- Men know something of the fall of man.
- Men know something of the condemnation they are under.
- Men know that something must be done to build again our houses which have fallen.
- But here is the madness, the deceitfulness, the wickedness of our hearts.

2. *But we will build*--this was the message of false prophets then and of false teachers today

3. *With hewn stones*--not only can we build it, we can build it better, with chiseled stone rather than bricks. This reminds me of what the Lord said about the altar of stone. **Exodus 20:25: And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone:**

for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. 26: Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

Salvation is--start to finish--the work of the Lord. If thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. If you attempt to go up by steps, thy nakedness shall be discovered. **Psalm 127:1 <<A Song of degrees for Solomon.>> Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain.**

Malachi 1:4: Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

4. (This fourth thing reveals the real problem we have in the way we seek God.) *The sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars*

- They not only said they could rebuild their houses, but that they could improve upon the creation around them.
- The real problem with the way spiritually dead sinners seek God is that the unregenerate sinner puts himself in the place of the Creator.

Romans 1:25: [Unregenerate religious men change] the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator

Illustration: Do our preachers say what these false prophets said in Isaiah's day? Not only are preachers today saying what these false prophets said, but so are our leaders. They intended to save themselves by their works, even improve upon God's creation by replacing the sycamores with cedars. What do our leaders say today?

The Holy Spirit says, **2 Peter 3:10...the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.**

- The madness of sinner's says, "The globe is warming? We'll stop that. We'll go green. We will replace the sycamores with cedars." And we award such nonsense!
- BUT WORSE, THIS IS THE VERY HEART OF MAN'S SO-CALLED REPENTANCE AND FAITH--I BROKE IT, I'LL FIX IT!
- JUST AS THE FIRST CREATION WAS GOD'S WORK. THE NEW CREATION MADE WITHIN A SINNER IS GOD'S WORK. SINNER'S ARE UTTERLY INCAPABLE OF MAKING THE NEW CREATION--THE NEW HEART--WHICH GOD REQUIRES.

Proverbs 16:25: There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

So be sure you get this: The heart is so deceitful, that even under the judgments of God, -- (sickness, bereavement, economic hardship, domestic trouble, and personal tragedy) man will grope in darkness for an escape--not for the Lord--for an escape:

- Judgment will make a man build himself up with a religious profession and membership in the church
- Judgment will make a man hew out the stones of a reformed life and “fly right” for a time
- Judgment will cause a man to do whatever it takes short of confessing his nothingness and submitting to Christ.
- Yet, a legal fear, a fire escape from hell or troubles of life, that so many sinner's regard as true repentance toward God, is repentance to be repented of.
- Ask Cain (Gen 4: 13); Pharoah (Ex 9: 27); Herod (Mat 14: 9-10); or Judas (Mat 27: 4-5.)
- Not even hell will make a man repent--ask the rich man in hell (Luke 16: 16-31)

Turn to Psalm 78: 31: The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel. 32: For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. 33: Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. 34: When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. 35: And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer. 36: Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. 37: For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

III. WHAT MUST YOU HAVE BEFORE YOU WILL TRULY REPENT AND SEEK THE LORD?

If our sin and spiritual death is so great that the awesome power of God's judgment upon Israel would not produce repentance then it must take an exceedingly great power to do so?

1. Turn to Ephesians 1: 17-23--God must come to us in power.

Gill--The objects of the divine power here intended, are believers in Christ; which distinguishes this power from that which was put forth in creation, and from that which will be displayed in the resurrection of the dead, and from the power of divine wrath which will appear in the damnation of sinners; and shows, that this power is that which is exerted in the implantation of faith, and in the continuance of it, and in the finishing of that work; and that this is a great power, an exceeding great one, a super eminent one

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....9: Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10: Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?...11: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12: If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you *of* heavenly things?

Ezekiel 36: 25: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26: A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27: And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them....31: Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. 32: Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

2. In the new birth Christ is formed in you and it is only the revelation of Christ in the heart that will make us repent.

Zechariah 12: 10: And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

- Then we behold the awful judgment of God that was upon him was the judgment that was our due. But Christ bore it on our behalf.
- We behold we have an Advocate with the Father, a High Priest
- Christ becomes the power and wisdom of God to us
- Of God is he made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, so that all our glorying is in the Lord alone.

Jeremiah 31: 19: Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon *my* thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

Titus 3: 5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6: Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7: That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Remember these three things:

- 1: We have a heart issue--proud and stout-hearted!
2. Repentance originating out of a mere fear of God's wrath--of hell--is not repentance!
3. We need God to come to us in power, create us anew, to reveal Christ in us--that is how God grants true repentance.

Application:

1. The hard-heart will hear this and say, "If none but God can make me repent then why does he blame me if I don't repent!" Nay o Man, Who Art Thou That Repliest Against God? (Ro 9: 20.) That is the voice of a proud, stout heart.

John 3: 17: For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18: He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19: And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21: But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

2. But where God has begun this work in power, the broken hearted come as the leper,

Mt 8: 2:...and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 3: And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Or like the Canaanite woman: Mt 15: 25: **Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. 26: But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* to dogs. 27: And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. 28: Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.**

Are you a leprous dog? Or can you build your own house?

The poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness...do you know what they all have in common? They are all blessed. It was God's blessed power upon them that made them that way.

Are you poor in spirit, do you mourn for Christ, do you approach him in meekness rather than stoutness of heart, are you really hungry and thirsty for Christ's Righteousness?

I pray that God will grant you repentance this day. Amen.