

“A Thorough Work of God Continued” - To complement the sermon preached February 28, 2016

<http://cornerstone-marion.org/2016/02/28/february-28-2016-genesis-42-44-a-thorough-work-of-god/>

By way of review, the three main points from Sunday’s sermon were:

1. Thorough repentance requires remorse...(Genesis 42:21-24)
2. Thorough repentance produces a change of behavior...(Genesis 43:31-44:34)
3. Thorough repentance accepts guilt and consequences...(Genesis 44:16, 30-34)

As soon as Joseph sees the full work of repentance in his brothers’ lives, he responds this way:

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 45:1** Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. <sup>3</sup> Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. <sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!" <sup>5</sup> And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

Joseph reveals himself. Confesses himself as their brother, and confirms that he is not there to be their judge, jury, and executioner, but to save them, to take care of them, to preserve their lives.

Joseph’s actions point forward when the Greatest Brother, Jesus Christ, would make himself available for the salvation of those in more dire need...a salvation from sin. Our greatest problems are not famines or even a broken families, but enmity with God. We need reconciliation and salvation before God, and our elder brother Jesus has made a way.

But this is not automatic...we have a choice to make. We have to act. I’d summarize this action this way: To know Jesus as savior and brother, we must yield to His thorough work of repentance. This was what happened to Joseph’s brothers. To know Joseph as savior and brother, they had to yield to his thorough efforts of repentance. So much more so, to know Jesus as savior and brother, we must yield to His thorough work of repentance.

And remember: Thorough repentance requires remorse. Thorough repentance produces a change. Thorough repentance accepts guilt and consequences. Some pastors might argue there’s a chronological order to this process, I’m more inclined to say they can come in any order. But one without the other too isn’t thorough enough.

A person who merely changes their behavior has not taken responsibility for the guilt and consequences. This is like the time I said something offensive and disrespectful to my wife. Instead of accepting blame for my action, I tried to make the deed go away by being super husband. I cleaned. I

served—all in an effort to make up for my action. But we could not be reconciled until remorse and admittance of guilt came along.

There was an English pastor around the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century named Richard Sibbes. Pastor Sibbes wrote a little book entitled, “The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax” in 1631. The book refers to a verse in Isaiah 42, that is quoted by Jesus during his earthly ministry. Matthew records Jesus’ words this way in 12:17-20: This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: <sup>18</sup> “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. <sup>19</sup> He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. <sup>20</sup> A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. <sup>21</sup> In his name the nations will put their hope.” (NIV)

Pastor Richard Sibbes wrote this book inviting people to accept God’s thorough work in our lives, but he noted that God’s thorough work often requires an intentional bruising of our souls and lives. Sibbes writes, “This bruising is required...before conversion so that the Spirit may make way for itself into the heart by leveling all proud, high thoughts, and that we may understand ourselves to be what we are by nature....brought to see [our] sin, which bruiseeth most of all.”

Notice the contrast, the most painful thing in our life is actually sin. Sin breaks our relationship with God; it breaks our relationship with others; it breaks our relationship with our self. Sin leads to death in this life and the next. When Sibbes says, “sin bruiseeth most of all,” he’s arguing that sin is the most deadly experience on the face of the earth.

But note well, in order to heal us, God will bring a bit of pain, sorrow, and other bruising to wake us up to our deeper wound. Jesus is the kind, humble, doctor with amazing bedside manner. He enters the hospital room. We say that we feel fine, but he gently lifts up our shirt and puts pressure on a place on our back that often gets missed. His touch hurts; it smarts so much. We at first, want to get away from a doctor who would hurt us so. But this is only the great physician Jesus trying to show us that we are not healthy, but desperately sick. This is why during his earthly ministry he said to the religious people - <sup>NIV</sup> Mark 2:17 “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

If you think you’re fine, Jesus can’t help you. But if you know you’re sick, Jesus is ready and available to forgive, heal, and restore.

Calvin Miller (1937-2012) used to pastor a Baptist church in Omaha. Though he recently died, in one of his last books, *The Path of Celtic Prayer*, he offers this pastoral counsel: “Through Christ that which we confess beckons the healing of God.”

I love this statement...we fear that confession of sin will lead to embarrassment...Pastor Calvin rightly teaches, that confession beckons God to our aid. God is like the kind Father who seeks his crying child to receive them into his arms and place a band aid on their soul. Ultimately, God wants us to pursue thorough repentance. We must get to the place where we realize that sin is the greatest evil. It’s the greater pain, the greater sorrow.

Sibbes notes again: "a man truly bruised judgeth sin the greatest evil, and the favour of God the greatest good." J. William Black explains Sibbes for modern ears: "But when God by his grace so wounds and bruises us, he does not leave us to die in the misery of our sins. When he bids us open our eyes and gaze at the reality of our sin, he does not leave us in despair. Rather, he widens our field of vision till we see that our sin is in fact fastened to the cross in Christ and dealt with there."

Sibbes: "There can be no danger in thorough healing. It is better to go bruised to heaven than sound to hell....Shall our sins discourage us, when he appears there only for sinners? Are thou bruised? Be of good comfort, he called thee; conceal not thy wounds, open all before him....Go to Christ trembling....Never fear to go to God..."

Note well, that the Scriptures declare that repentance itself is a gift of God... <sup>NIV</sup> **2 Timothy 2:25** "Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth..."

Note that it is God who grants (literally "gifts") repentance. It's a gift. We must pray for a thorough repentance in our lives. We must pray for a thorough repentance in the lives of others.

So, if you are a non-Christian, the Bible would say that without repentance, you will never be saved from sin, death, and hell. So, today, are you ready to turn from sin and turn to God? Repent with remorse. Repent with a commitment to change the way you live. Repent by accepting the full weight of your guilt and consequences. Come to Jesus Christ who died for you to bring you to God.

But it's possible you want God or salvation or repentance, but you aren't fully willing just yet. Maybe you have remorse, but you're not ready to change your life. Or you're still unwilling to accept that you deserve hell and judgment. My encouragement to you is to go home and pray to God...pray he'd change your heart...pray he'd lead you to repent...to thoroughly repentant...to deeply love and adore Jesus. That you'd obey the command: Be reconciled to God.

For the Christians, I beseech you to search your heart and see what places of your life have not experienced thorough repentance. How's your thought life? Are you deeply humble? Are you using your words to build up and not tear down? Would those in your family confirm with the LORD that you are a faithful servant when no one is watching?

As areas of your life are identified that have not experienced full repentance, go to the LORD in prayer and share where you're holding back. Talk to friends. If you don't even have remorse over an area you're pretty sure you should, pray that God would break your heart. Pray that you'd love the things God loves and hates the things God hates. Whatever you do...don't think leaving these sinful patterns as they are is wise.

As the great Puritan John Owen taught, "We must be killing sin or sin will be killing us."

Dearest friends, to know Jesus as savior and brother, we must yield to His thorough work of repentance.