

Call to Repent (part 2)

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[0:00] Well, our last time together, I wasn't here last Sunday, so we want to pick up where I left off the previous week because I didn't finish up with what we were dealing with.

We started going over this whole matter of repentance. We're talking about addictions, overcoming addictions. Addictions might take various forms, and that's what we've emphasized throughout the lesson here.

The emphasis, it seems, in our day today, you hear it on the news more and more, the opioid addictions, alcohol addictions, but we can take it beyond those things.

There are other substances we can become addicted to or abuse them, other substances or other activities, anything that we're using.

We set ourselves up as God and determine that, well, I can get my relief or whatever it is, my sense of peace, security, happiness, whatever it is, from something outside of God in a different way than which God has designed or created it.

[1:13] And as a result, we set ourselves up as God, being the ones to determine really what is best for me in opposition to what God has already revealed in His Word.

And so as faithful ambassadors, we trust that there are people out there who love God and love us enough that they're willing to do the hard thing and come to us with the truth.

Understanding what really is going to do the truth, understanding what really is going on here. Certainly there is an addiction that has taken place there and probably has gone to the extent where it's controlling the person physically.

But the bottom line is the individual has become a worshiper of something else other than God. And so while I'm going to help them in these other areas, the bottom line is their greatest need is to come into relationship with God by faith in Jesus Christ so that they can have a new source of life within them.

And that person of God Himself, His Holy Spirit, who will enlighten our minds to the counsel God has given us so that we can not only understand the truth we need for life, but also have the power we need to live that out in daily life in whatever the circumstances are that we are facing.

[2:41] So again, hopefully we're entering into the lives of people as Jesus did as well. There in heaven, could have stayed there enjoying all that he had as God, but he didn't consider that something that he should hang on to, to the extent that it would keep him from moving in our direction and fulfilling all that he had to do as God, living a righteous life and then dying as a sacrifice for us when we had no regard for him in that.

So we now, as ambassadors of Christ, are living the same way as he did in this world, making it our effort to in moving in the direction of people who are in need and bringing to them the love of God that God has poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, pouring that out in visible ways, whether it's through our words or our actions toward those who are in need.

And certainly it needs to be in word because we want to declare to them the truth that they desperately need to hear and to become convinced of and to believe and then to act upon so that they can live a brand new life and no longer be enslaved to sin, which is what addiction is.

But they can, as it says in Romans 6, live new lives. And so an important part of our ministry to people is taking the truth to them so that God, by his Spirit, can effect change within them in what they think about God, certainly, the person of Jesus Christ in particular, and what he did while he was in the world.

A change of thinking and the love in regard to themselves, instead of holding themselves up as God, the determiners of what life should be for them and how it's to be lived out and who they are in relationship to God.

[4:56] But then also a change in their inner being in regard to what God has created. So there's that change, again, in love and affections and the way we think about God's creation that needs to happen.

Not that all of these... How do I want to say it? There will be some initial changes within that will move them in the direction of God.

Now there's going to be some ongoing changes in their loves and what they love and how they act, how they speak, how they behave.

And we heard that from Pastor John in his message a couple weeks ago as he spoke from 2 Corinthians 3.18 and how the Spirit of God, who is the initiator of those changes within us, will move us in that direction of ongoing change from one level of glory to the next.

That's that progressive sanctification that's going to be taking place in us. So there's going to be additional changes within us in the way we think. Romans 12 talks about that.

[6:12] Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So again, my life is in process of change and my mind is being renewed more and more as I interact with God and His Word in different ways, whether it's from my personal reading, memorization, or attending services where I hear the Word of God taught.

So I'm going through this process of change and so there will be some ongoing repentance taking place in my life as I grow in understanding and in love for God.

So what we want to take a look at this morning is continue to follow up on that and finish that lesson on what must change or what changes in my inner being in regard to the things that God has made, things outside of me.

Because when I'm addicted, again, I'm setting up these things that God has made to be my personal Savior, to provide me something that I should be looking to God for, whether it's, as we heard in some testimonials in the past, whether it was looking for some sort of acceptance, some sort of peace, some sort of security.

So we're wondering, what do I turn to? What do you find yourself turning to?

[7:52] I mean, some people even use that term. What's your comfort food? And you find that something happens and how do you react?

I mean, your reactions will tell you a lot about what you really believe is going to be your source of your salvation. And so it's in those reaction times that you really want to look and examine what's happening.

I mean, when you react so quickly, I mean, a reaction is acting without thinking. So it may be after the fact that you have to do some examination and think through, well, why did I do that?

What was I looking for that I thought this, whatever it is, substance or activity, was going to give me? And why did I turn to that rather than God, who is the one that I should be looking for, to provide what I was looking for, that activity or that substance to give me?

So there's going to be this change in the way we think, again, about God, ourselves, but also the things in this world that we may find ourselves turning to to give us what we should be really looking to God to give us.

[9:12] So understanding biblically about the things that God has made. So we can turn to Romans 1, 18 through 25. I'm going to come to this conclusion that I won't turn to what God has created to provide what I'm to get from God.

And Paul is helping the people here understand the foolishness of making this exchange of created things for God.

In verse 20, it says, For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

So all that God has made is communicating something to us about God, not so much something about itself as the Savior, as the Sovereign, but pointing to He who is the Savior and the Sovereign.

Verse 22, Although they claimed to be wise people, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man, birds, animals, and reptiles.

[10:29] So we're understanding, we've come to this conclusion, this realization that for me to turn to something other than God, the things that He has made, according to these verses, that's a foolish thing to do.

And we're understanding that's a foolish thing to do because why would you turn to something created rather than to the one who created that thing? Understanding that the one who created these things is greater than the things that He created.

So if I need help, don't turn to the lesser, turn to the greater. And that is God. And Paul is trying to help the people understand. If you're making this exchange, understand that's a foolish thing to do, to exchange the glory of the immortal God for something made like mortal man, something temporary.

All this change that takes place within me as a person as I'm going through these struggles. What are my struggles telling me about what I believe about God and the things that He has made?

Which one is supreme? Which one am I convinced is the greater? And if you're over here, you need to come to that conclusion for your own well-being and for the glory of God, really I'm acting foolishly.

[11:57] It's a foolish thing that I'm doing here. Romans 1. Second point. Understanding that I'm to love God above all and not things of this world above Him.

So I'm not going to love what God has created more than God. I love something more than God when I disobey Him in order to get something or to keep something.

I use something in creation, again, as a substitute for God. Of course, the two greatest commandments, Mark 12, 29 through 30. Here is the Lord our God.

The Lord is one. I mean, it's always interesting when we think of those two greatest commandments, we jump right to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And forget, here is the Lord our God. The Lord is one. He's sovereign above all. The only true God. And understanding that, that should affect what comes next.

[13:00] Therefore, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, the Lord our God is one. Therefore, love Him above all.

Don't give those affections to something other than Him. We can enjoy the things that are out here, but not to the extent where they become our chief priority love and take the place of our one true love, the one who deserves our love completely.

Love Him. In 1 John, is that 3, Carol? My notes are messed up. 3, 2. 1 John 2, 15 through 17.

John was helping the people that he was writing to understand the same concept as they were in the world faced with many of the same things we're faced with, understanding that the affections of their own hearts could be drawn to something other than God.

So God had John write to them and said, Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes, the boastings of what he has and does comes not from the Father but from the world.

[14:22] The world and its desires pass away but the man who does the will of God lives forever. So understanding what's going on here, people, that John is helping them understand.

Don't let your affections go in this way so that you love the world more than you love God. If you're in that process, then you have to understand that love is not of God.

Because any love that God has placed within your heart is not directed toward the things of the world, the cravings of the flesh and the other things he lists here.

But the love of God that he's poured within our hearts by the presence of his Holy Spirit is directed toward God and in ways that manifest our love for God.

And anything else, we have to understand that the source is not from God. So again, we're becoming convinced and understanding if I'm loving something out of bounds here that is not God and is not in a way that would be characteristic of the person of Jesus Christ, I have to understand that is not true love.

[15:33] And I'm being controlled by something else within me. So we cannot misunderstand what true biblical concept of love is.

And when I understand that true biblical concept, God, the love of the Holy Spirit within me, I understand that the Spirit of God enlightened my eyes to that, then I will be repenting.

Repentance will show up in my life as I again direct my focus toward God and toward life as God has designed it for me to live.

That is true biblical love. That is how a person is really living out the love of God, which will be the greatest pleasure that we can experience in this life.

To know God, to know the love of God, and live out that love in daily life in regard to Him, ourselves, and His creation around us.

[16:36] If you want to understand the pleasure of life, understand the love of God and how to live that out according to His design. And this is what John is helping these people understand.

Recognize the potential within you to move in this direction. And then don't let that happen. Third point, my hope in this life must be in God, not material things.

1 Timothy 6, 1, or 4. Again, my notes are messed up there. Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope into wealth, or we could say anything else that you might find that you're putting your hope in.

You know, wonderful children, a secure job, money in the bank, healthy body, whatever it is. Don't put your hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

So the things in this world, we can enjoy them, but we must enjoy them understanding their true condition and what they're truly created for and who they are created by God.

[17:57] So that we don't become entangled with them to the degree that now we're denying ourselves the true enjoyment we could be getting from them as we interact with them in the right way.

As things created by God that we can enjoy in the right way. Again, by His design. So I'm understanding that now.

When I've become addicted, I've put my hope in this thing, this substance, this activity, whatever it is, to give me something that I should be getting from God as the one true creator and my redeemer, my savior.

And so, my hope is misplaced. My hope is placed in this thing here, which, again, from testimonials or from your own experience, you know, it doesn't work.

I remember years ago, this was years ago, that I drove by a car lot. It's a beautiful car.

[19:11] It was a 1973 luxury Le Mans and maroon with a white vinyl top. Oh, man, that is great. And at the time, we had, what, a 70-something international scout.

Scout, too. They didn't make those anymore. I'd like to have that now rather than the luxury Le Mans. But I thought, I've got to have that. And so, we had made this principle, the standard in our lives since we were first married, never by anything, what, on time or with a loan that's a depreciating item.

Well, what did I do? You know, I loved that thing. And so, we bought that car. And I now had a loan of \$800.

What's the big deal? Hey, it still was a wrong thing to do. Whether it's \$800 or \$20,000 today, whatever it would be. Well, God had mercy.

At the time, I was a caretaker of an estate. That means I took care of the grounds. This guy, at the time, owned the biggest department store in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

[20:30] So he saw me drive that car in. And the next morning, I usually checked in with him. He had a gravelly voice. Where'd you get the car? Well, I got it.

How'd you pay for that? You know? Well, I had to get a loan. The GM loan. you know, because he is a businessman thinking probably that was a stupid thing to do. And so, God had mercy.

He said, why don't you let me give you the money and you don't have to pay interest? Oh, great. You know, I'll do that. So, God had mercy. But at the same time, I felt terrible that we had this car.

I had denied principles that we had determined we were going to live by. So I had to go out and get a second job. Now, this job was really interesting.

Not that this is going to be a storytelling time for you. But it was at a record factory. And so, second shift, making records, the 45 records.

[21:28] And this company happened to make Polish polka music. And so, what did they do through the whole shift?

Play Polish polka. Now, excuse me, any of you that might be Polish here today and enjoy listening to polka music. I mean, that was all I had to do to go to work every day and listen to that.

But, God used it. We got the thing paid off. I stopped the job, got back to priorities of life and we continued on. But, you know, I had put that thing in a position where I shouldn't have put it.

And can you believe it? After I had that car a few weeks, you know, it didn't seem that special to me. Because it wasn't designed to fulfill what only God could fulfill in my life.

I had set it up as something greater than what it really was supposed to be. And that has come back to me over and over again through the years and has been a helpful lesson to learn.

[22 : 32] So, our hope in this life is not in things that God has created but God Himself. Romans 15, 13 says, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him.

So, our trust isn't going to be in these man-made things to give us what God can give us. But we'll be in God. May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace as you trust in Him so that you may overflow with hope.

Overflow with hope. So, now we have an abundance of hope while we're yet in this life. And it's not something that maybe gives us a little tingle for a little while, a few weeks, and then wears off.

And what do I got? Well, I've got to have to go out and buy 80 luxury lemons or whatever else. Something new or something bigger and better. No, it's not the way it works.

it makes no sense to put my hope in created things rather than the Creator Himself. And Isaiah 44, God used Isaiah to help people understand that too when they were turning toward idols that they had seen and had become convinced like, well, like these people here that were in this land that they worship these idols and they seem to be prospering.

[23 : 53] Therefore, the conclusion is I must also go after these idols and worship them in order to be and have what they have over here. Wrong conclusion to come to.

And Isaiah drives this point home and I won't read all these verses but you'll remember it's when the carpenter designs a god he goes out and chooses a piece of wood and carves out his god.

The rest of the wood he uses to burn a fire. He's going to warm himself and then eventually turns back to what he selected and what he designed in fashion and he prays to it and says, save me, you are my god.

We think, how stupid is that? Well, you could have set me down in front of that luxury of the mons and I could have said, save me, you are my god. You know, give me what I'm looking for you to give me and that was a foolish thing to do.

And so, we're not looking toward those created things. So, just a few verses that help us understand something of the change that takes place within us. Some initial changes so that when we hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and our need of Christ and that move us to confess Jesus Christ as our Lord.

[25 : 14] So, there's that, those initial changes like that, but then there's these ongoing changes that are a result of the true work of the Spirit of God within us that affect these other changes that we certainly follow along, we cooperate with, we cultivate in our lives as we recognize from the reading of God's Word and the Spirit of God teaches us, we say, oh yes, I understand that about myself and see, I haven't been thinking that way and as a result, this is how I've been acting so now God tells me this so now I understand what is true and good and wise and therefore, this is how I need to change so in love for God and really for myself and for those around me, this is what I'm going to put on now and the way in which I'm going to walk.

So we're always going through this process of change and repentance as God's people that affect our inner man and what we love and how we think, but as I said in the previous lesson, all of these things that are happening within us in the way we think and what we love is going to overflow outwardly.

there's going to be an outward evidence and manifestation. I mean, if it's real within, it's going to happen. It's going to come outside of us as we come to the realization of the truth.

I mean, it's one thing you don't, I didn't know anything about. Okay, now you do. Now you do know God's counsel. What are you going to do with the counsel of God at that point?

Are you going to love God first above all and understanding that God counsels me with wise, loving counsel that's good for me and the people that are around me?

[27 : 12] Am I going to love that more? And if we are, then there's going to be some outward changes in our communication verbally, but also in the way that we act.

There's going to be some behavioral changes that again correspond with the inner changes that have taken place. That's my hope. I mean, I hope that within a year, two years, five years, if God gives me five years, more years of life, that I will be more different than than what I am today.

I'll still be repenting, growing, to know God and how to live out His counsel for life. So what are some of these outward changes that are going to show up?

And this is how we want to spend the rest of our lessons, this lesson and the two to follow. This week, some of the initial outward manifestation of the inner change that has taken place.

And then next week, we'll take a look at, well, what are some of the restructuring that really has to take place? How do I evaluate something of my life that crumbled and crashed that we saw in the lesson on what are some of the consequences?

[28 : 30] What does that rebuilding look like here? And what is my part in this? And so we'll take a look at restructuring some of these areas in regard to whether there's some of the things to avoid, but then what are some of the things to run after as well.

But this morning, let's finish up on looking at what I would think would be some of the first initial outward expressions of that inner change, the repentance.

And that is in the area of confession. Confession of sin and initially confession of sin to God. It's interesting to hear people who have come to true repentance give testimony that one of the first things they did was to cry out to God for help and confession of their sin and rejection of Him.

You think back over your life, after you've, maybe it was at your initial salvation, when you finally, I mean, the way Carol puts it in her testimony, it's like the lights went on.

You finally saw yourself in your true condition and you finally saw God as He is as God and it's like you just have to say something.

[29 : 45] You have to cry out to God. And this is some of the things that we've heard. It's almost like there's this inner yearning to talk to God and to admit my sin and rebellion and to ask Him to forgive me and help me.

Just think about that. I think it's something that is there as a real work of the Spirit of God within us that when we realize those things, it's almost like He's there, I know He's there and I need to talk to Him about what I've been like and what needs to happen in my life now.

Brad Hamrick in his material on overcoming addictions gives this quote and this kind of change in thinking. It says, My addiction is a counterfeit God mocking my Savior.

I'm beginning to see how offensive my addiction is to God and how much pride I express trying to be or replace God with my addiction. I repent not merely because my addiction hurts other people or disrupts my life but because God is superior to my addiction and lovingly enables me to love Him.

So it's almost like you want to move in that direction of the One who has loved you so much not only to do all that but to open my heart to know the reality of who He is and who I am.

[31:17] I have to talk to Him and express something to Him. And we certainly see this in David's prayer in Psalm 51 1-4 as he says, Have mercy on me, O God.

I can just see Him after he's been confronted by God's loving ambassador Nathan and Nathan with shaky knees maybe and came to the king and loved God and David enough to share this truth with him.

And David realizes what he has done and he cries out to God, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. And that's what we call upon and that's what we count on really is unfailing love.

He's been there. According to your great compassion, blot out my transgression. So you see the changes that obviously have taken place in David's inner man in regard to what he thinks about God, what he knows about God and what he's now realizing about himself more and more.

God, unfailing love, great compassion, great merciful God, me, and in my transgressions, my iniquity.

[32:39] He says, Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. You see how he's trying to deal with these issues of his life now. He's not ignoring these issues and trying to deal with them in some other way apart from God.

No, he's come to the realization, inner change, repentance has taken place so that now he realizes that there is only deliverance through this God, the God who created all things, the things that I misused over here.

I'm turning back to him. He is the one who is able to bring deliverance, to cleanse me, to really bring me to the place where I really need to be that I thought I could achieve over here, but it can only be accomplished in him.

And that's a great realization. He says, Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I know my transgression, my sin is always before me. You are proved right.

You see that? The inner change. God's been right all along. He just proved right. Now, you're proved right.

[33:48] He realizes, I've been wrong all along over here. It needs to be changed, corrected now. And all this is what's been transpiring in his heart is now flowing out of his heart in his words to God in this relationship.

Whereas in the past, he was saying, no, no, no. Now he's just opening up, bowing to the sovereign God in great humility, looking to God to be the Savior that he needs.

You're proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. He's righteous in all that he does. All that I've been experiencing over here as a result of my sin, it certainly gives testimony of God's right counsel and his right justice.

And now David is bringing his life in full alignment with the truth of who God is and the counsel that he's provided. And you just see and hear the relief flowing out in David's words here that enters his whole life now and the rest and peace that it brings.

Psalm 32 5 says, again from David, Then I acknowledged my sin to you. I did not cover up my iniquity. I said I'll confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

[35 : 15] This change, this initial expression of outward repentance, what's been taking place inside, so necessary and such a, I'll say a supernatural thing, but a natural thing for us to do with the spirit of God's initiating help, certainly.

Speaking to God in this way, confirming, affirming what God is doing in our hearts and lives. Now I am willingly verbalizing, yielding my member, my mouth, yielding my member over to the reality of what is true and right and good, and receiving the benefit of rest, peace.

As a result of that, God's ways are good. They're good for us. And they put Him in the place where He is to be in our lives as God's sovereign over all, the only wise God.

And of course, 1 John 1 9, well, how will God respond to all this? Psalm 51 17, David says, a broken and contrite heart, oh God, you will not despise.

No, God's ready there, ready to receive, ready to hear that from us and welcomes that. And John confirms the same thing when he says, 1 John 1 9, if we confess our sins, meaning if we say the same thing about it, approach our sin the same way that God approaches, the same way that he thinks about it, interchange repentance.

[36 : 54] If we confess our sin, he's faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. So that result of that ongoing, that repentance that takes place within us.

So there's no need for me to wallow in self-pity as a means of penance. Is that all there is to it? Well, yes, there is.

It's not like your ongoing tears are going to earn you greater forgiveness of God. He doesn't forgive us our sin on the basis of the amount of tears that we shed, the number of times we beat ourselves verbally, how could I?

I'm a rotten person, etc., etc., etc. etc. It's based upon the person of Jesus Christ and what he's done. There's no reason to spend time regretting all that's been lost in years past.

Oh, here I'm at this time. I wasted all these years when I could have been loving God, enjoying what God has said. Don't go there. Enjoy the reality of what God has said in his word.

[38 : 04] I forgive him. Go on from there. Live in the new reality of life in Christ and what that looks like. Of course, that's what we're going to be studying, what that looks like.

What is that new reality? Very specifically, let's get some handles that we can hang on to as far as what that's going to look like in my life. So now is the time to keep in step with the Spirit of God that leads and instructs us from God's word and live in the reality of forgiveness that God gives us.

Well, before we go on to that restructuring, next week we'll finish up on this lesson. for some reason I get talking a little too much, too many stories or whatever it is, can't get through a lesson, but as we confess that first outward expression of our inner repentance, that confession to God, also we're thinking of relationships with other people.

What does confession look like to those who very likely have been affected by my sin that I've been giving myself during this time? How do I move in the direction of bringing those relationships back together?

We won't spend a lot of time on that because we in the past have looked at some of this in the past, but we'll at least bring some reminders to you about what that might entail.

[39 : 31] So let's close in prayer. Father, this morning how thankful we are that again you are the God who you are. And Father, that's what we count on, not just for our initial salvation, justification, but ongoing, all the things that we believe in the gospel.

Father, the things that we look to to be true for us in our ongoing life in Christ. We depend so much upon you and your Holy Spirit to enlighten us, our thinking.

We're still so much in need of that, Father, and those changes in what we love and what we think. And as we enter the morning service and the evening service, Father, as your word is presented, help us to receive it as not from the word of men, Father, but actually your word.

And then as your word comes into us, our minds help by your spirit to enlighten us to the significance of that for our daily walk. And then may it really unite with a willing spirit, Father, of love for you and others around us so that we become doers of that word.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.