

The Blessing Of Repentance

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[0 : 00] Isaiah 40 tells us that the grass withers and the flower fades but the word of the Lord stands forever.! In Luke 1 we're told that no word from God shall be void of power. Would you pray with me?

Lord we ask that your Holy Spirit will illuminate and apply your truth from your word to your people for your glory. We thank you how you began a good work in each individual soul and you began a good work here with this congregation.

We trust as we have the promise in Philippians 1 that you will also see it through to completion.

Lord we ask for your power, for your strength, your energy to fulfill this ministry among us. Amen.

Well beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ. My message for you and for me today is simply that we can see the blessing of repentance.

Repentance is a blessing. To repent is to turn from one thing to another. We just saying holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

[1 : 31] And repentance is when a sinner like you and me, born under Adam's curse with remaining sin in our own flesh is brought into the presence of a holy God. And our sin is exposed so that we hate it.

And we hate it because we behold the holy God. We're in his presence by his grace. Psalm 51 is one of the best illustrations in words for those of us in whom the Lord is working such repentance. And there's a hard verse in this Psalm. David asks, Lord. Would you cause the bones that you have broken to rejoice?

It's the Lord who breaks the bone that we will rejoice as he heals us.

Thomas Watson, pastor in the 1600s in England, made that same observation. How welcome is a surgeon to a man who is bleeding from his wounds.

[2 : 38] So first the Lord exposes it, then he comes and heals. You're likely here because you or someone you love has experienced this. What we have in our passage for today, first Samuel 12, is such repentance that, you know, you've experienced the Lord willing.

You will soon because the Lord has brought you here. What's special about this chapter is it happens on a national scale. It's a corporate repentance. And my goal today is simply to walk through this passage, reading it together and make four observations about the blessing of repentance.

A blessing is a gift from God. It's a good thing. It's a spiritual treasure from heaven given to us right now in this life to enjoy. And that's what repentance is.

So the first observation from our passage is this. The Lord raises up servants whom he has taught the blessing of repentance. The Lord raises up a servant like Samuel.

Why is Samuel qualified? Because Samuel has experienced the blessing of repentance himself.

The Lord causes repentance as his people hear his word.

[3 : 54] But who's going to stand up and deliver the word to God's people? We've seen how Samuel has been criticized as a minister of God's word. That's the last interaction between the nation of Israel and Samuel.

But now verse 12, Samuel stands up. Now, remember, there in Gilgal, they had this great deliverance from Nahash, that serpent. The Lord's spirit rushed upon Saul, the most unlikely of men.

And now the beginning of chapter 12, Samuel says to all Israel, would you look at verse one with me? Indeed, I have heeded or listened to your voice and all that you said to me and I've made a king over you.

Verse two. And now there is the king, Saul, right here walking before you. Remember how the people rejected Samuel and they were begging for a king to be like all the other nations. Their charges against Samuel were two things. Samuel, you're old and your sons are corrupt. Remember those two charges?

[5 : 00] One of those charges is accurate. His sons were corrupt and he was allowing that to happen. The other charge of being old is not a sin. It should not disqualify him.

So they were wrong on the other. But before Samuel can minister God's word to the people, he needs to address those two charges. Look at verse two. I am old and gray headed. There's the first one. And here's the second charge. He says, look, my sons are with you or among you. My sons are not above you as judges any longer.

My sons are not in a position where they can continue stealing from you. They're among you. I've removed them from their office. I agree with the commentators that conclude this shows now, at least at this point in history, that Samuel has applied discipline to God's people as he should have long ago.

It's like Samuel saying, if I'm not qualified to minister to you any longer, you must show me my sin so that I can make it right. So that I can continue fulfilling the charge that the Lord has given me to minister to you.

[6 : 15] Look at what Samuel says next. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. My whole life is in a fishbowl in front of you to observe. Verse three says, here I am.

Witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed. Samuel is a humble minister establishing credibility to deliver this message he needs to give that the people need to hear. And he's beating them to any objections that would disqualify him from doing the thing God has charged him with doing. What's the courtroom that he's just set up? He begins by putting himself as the defendant.

The minister saying, charge me with anything else that I need to make right. Show me my sin so that I can confess and not be disqualified.

Well, who's the prosecutor? It's the congregation of God's people. And who's the judge? This is so rich. Don't miss this in verse three.

[7 : 19] Witness against me. Here's the judge before the Lord and his anointed. Saw now as a type of Christ among the people.

A man. But he's the anointed of the Lord set up as the judge between Samuel and the people. In verse five, he said, the Lord is my witness against you.

And his anointed is witness this day that you have not found anything in my hand. There's nothing I need to confess and make right. They answered. He is witness.

And then Samuel now has this freedom to enjoy publicly before God's people to fulfill the calling God's given given him to do.

Satan does not want that to happen in God's people then or now. And the Lord comes to declare your sins are pardoned by my grace.

[8 : 29] How is it that a safe center can stand up and proclaim the holy word of the holy God only by God's grace and only by the Holy Spirit showing a people.

This is the humble means. This is the earthen vessel God has designed for our souls on this earth. We don't really understand it, do we?

But this is what he has set up. And I believe if you're like me, it's very easy to hear the accusations of the enemy that I shouldn't take it from anyone.

Because we can sit up there one preacher after the other popular unknown and tear them to shreds. Giving ourselves an excuse from hearing the truth of God, no matter who it's coming from. And that same accusation is true in the family level or in a relationship. How can a husband minister God's word to his wife?

[9 : 27] She knows his sins and his faults better than anyone else. Right. But yet it's what we're called to do. To gospel one another through it. To forgive one another.

Receive God's word. Through those humble, broken, but forgiven means that he's given us. How can parents minister to their children? It's because the Lord and his anointed.

God the creator and Jesus Christ. They tell you parents. Your sins are pardoned. And your children can look at you and they can say, I know all your faults. But I know that there's nothing I need to hold against you because your sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ.

And God gradually teaches us as church to see one another clothed in Christ's righteousness. Why? Because that's how the Lord and his anointed see us. They are the judge. And that's what they declare over us. His people. Don't you need this gospel? That's how you can go out in the streets and preach the gospel as a saved sinner. [10:30] And verse five, the Lord is witness and his anointed is witness that day and again this day.

Psalm 51, verse 11. Repentance begins by declaring, I am guilty. Do not cast me away from your presence, O Lord.

Why should I be cast out? It's because I am guilty and you are holy. But you confess next. It depends on God alone. David prays, do not take your spirit from me.

I have your spirit in me by grace. He's cut me to the heart. He's regenerated me. And that spirit inside the believer puts our loves in order.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me by your generous spirit. That's what makes a broken hearted evangelist the only type of evangelist God will use.

[11:31] He says, then I will make transgressors know transgressors know your ways and sinners shall be converted to you. Why?

Because I am a broken hearted but joyful evangelist. The Lord raises up servants whom he has taught the blessing of repentance.

The Lord wants to raise you up, raise up an army of such ministers. Here's the second observation. The Lord causes us to hear his word ministered to us.

It's the Lord who causes us, you and me, the people of Israel, Lydia in the book of Acts, to hear his word. And it's applied powerfully in the hearing of his word as it's ministered to you by such ministers.

Well, what's the theme of Samuel's sermon to the people of God? Let's look at verse six together. Then Samuel said to the people, it is the Lord who raised up fill in the blank.

[12:39] He starts all the way back with Moses and Aaron, who brought your forefathers out of slavery in Egypt. Now, remember, Samuel took them all the way to Gilgal. And that's the first encampment of the people after they crossed the Jordan, the next generation with Joshua.

And what is it that's right there in Gilgal? An illustration for this sermon he's preaching to them that it was the Lord who raises up. It's those 12 stones from inside the Jordan River that they carried out with them and set there.

And this is where Samuel now wants the people to stand and see. Now, here's the pattern he sets up in verse seven. Now, therefore, stand still that I may reason with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and your fathers.

His argument is that the raising up of a servant deliverer, it always happens after the people cry out to God. Then he sets the pattern this way in verse eight.

In verse eight, when Jacob had gone into Egypt, that's all of Jacob's, Jacob's 12 sons, 12 tribes, and your fathers cried out to the Lord. See, there's the crying out. Then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who in verse six, he just said he had raised up for that very purpose, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place.

[13:57] But then the pattern begins that brings them up to this point in redemptive history. The people forget the Lord, their God. Then in verse nine, he says, when they forgot the Lord, their God.

What happens next is the Lord hands the people over to the enemy. He tells them in verse nine that God sold them into the hands of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab.

And they fought against them. Well, what happens next in this pattern? Number three, the people cry out to the Lord again. You see the cycle. And in verse 10, then they cried out to the Lord and said, we have sinned because we have forsaken the Lord and we have served the Baals and the Asterisks.

Those are images of the pagan nations that we are worshiping now in the place of the true God, the creator. And so they asked the Lord to deliver us from the hand of our enemies and then we will serve you.

And the last step in this pattern is that the Lord is faithful. He delivers his people from the enemy. In verse 11, and the Lord sent and he lists all these different judges, which is the book preceding this one.

[15 : 04] And he delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side and you dwelt safely. That was Samuel's sermon. That's what he preached up to this point.

Don't forget the Lord who just delivered you. He raised up Saul, but don't turn Saul into an idol. Saul is another Samson. He's another Samuel, another servant that the Lord raised up to accomplish his purpose.

But do not become like all the other nations. The Lord knows your heart. One generation after the other has to learn this. Hitherto, the Lord has been our help.

Don't forget. The Lord causes us to hear his word ministered to us. But here's the third observation. Through his word, the Lord addresses our sin directly.

So he set up this pattern. Now get ready for it. Look at what Samuel does. I think Thomas Watson expresses this so well. Once again, the eye is both for seeing and for weeping.

[16 : 15] Sin must first be seen before it can be wept for. Watch what happens in verse 12. When you saw that Nahash, the king of the Amorites came against you and you said to me, no, but a king shall reign over us.

Then the Lord your God, he was already your king. And you did not cry out to him. Samuel is giving them a great twist. Now he set up this pattern.

When you get captured and you cry out to God, you turn away from being like all the other nations. And you cry out for God, then he delivers you. The twist is that you, people of Israel in this generation, you did not cry out in repentance to God, your king.

Instead, you cried out for a king from among you and you rejected God. This is your sin. Don't you see it so clearly? If you had cried out to God, what would have come next in the pattern?

God would have been faithful to raise up a servant deliverer. But you have still not repented. That's what he's showing them.

[17 : 22] The Lord delivered you before you even repented. That's not the pattern that the Lord set up. What's God doing here? See, God is so merciful.

God is delivering his people using the very man for whom their hearts and their national identity lusted. In verse 13, look at what Samuel says.

You wanted a king that was a man like all the nations instead of God himself. Now, therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the Lord has set this king over you.

People of God, don't you see what you deserve for your rebellion is curses. You are covenant breakers.

But the Lord's not cursing you for this. He's giving you that sinful idol. You wanted a champion. You wanted a federal head.

[18 : 28] The Lord says to them, I've given you what you wanted. Now, let's see how well this man, Saul, represents you as a nation. Your fate is in the hands of the king you chose.

In verse 14, if you fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord. It's a conditional blessing.

It's all stacked up. All of this has to happen. Then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God. Can you do it? Verse 15.

Verse 15. However, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandments of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you as it was against your fathers.

What is God teaching his people here? What are they to learn from this? I think you can see hints of the gospel already. While they are sinners before they've even repented.

[19 : 33] The Lord is binding the fate of his people with the fate of the king, the federal head. And it's to teach them and you and me this principle.

As goes the kingdom. So goes the king and vice versa. As goes the king. So goes the kingdom.

How are you going to do on your own strength with saw as your king?

You and I need to pause for a moment of application here. As Americans that value independence and individualism, we can miss this important principle of a federal head in the kingdom.

But we can't escape the reality. We are under one federal head or the other. It's either under the curses of Adam in this world that has been taken over by Satan temporarily with God's permission, except for the church.

Or you're under Jesus Christ. There are only two federal heads. You're under one or the other. You can say I didn't choose to be under Adam's curses. That's the nature of a kingdom.

[20 : 47] How is it going for you? How is it going for you? With Adam as your federal head. By your own strength, your own power. Trying to secure blessings from God by doing it well enough.

How's it going? Under Adam, what we got were curses. We got thorns, death and fear. We got banishment away from the presence of the Holy God, the creator.

And maybe some today you still live under those curses and that's all you know. The light of the gospel in the kingdom of heaven on earth through Jesus.

It just sounds like empty words. You don't know anything other than belonging to the curses of Satan with Adam as your federal head.

My prayer has been this week that you and I will see more powerfully today and maybe some for the first time in your life. This wonderful gift.

[21 : 54] That Jesus Christ came to be your king. To adopt you into his family that you belong secure in the borders of his kingdom. Safe, secure in him forever.

Never to be taken hostage or drug back out. You're his. You're his. You're only his until he breaks the bone.

He first has to cause you and me to see our great need for him as our king. And enjoy the blessing of true repentance. He does this through his word.

He addresses your sin and mine directly. Through his word. As Psalm 51 says, he searches and knows me. And he shows which ways are unclean within me.

And he leads us on the path of righteousness with Jesus Christ, the good shepherd, our king and our savior out in front. My fourth observation from this passage.

[22 : 58] The last one for today is this. What leads God's people to repentance? How does God do it? What is it in this passage that shows us this is how God leads a rebellious, unrepentant people to repent?

Two things I see here. First. God's greatness. God's greatness is the first step toward repentance. And the second one is God's grace. First, you see his greatness. You see your need for his grace. And when you see those two, he turns you around.

You repent. First of God's greatness. And my prayer is that we'll see it just as God caused them to see it. Look at verse 16. Now, therefore, Samuel tells them, stand and see.

Stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes. Verse 17 is today not the wheat harvest. I will call to the Lord and he will send thunder and rain that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great.

[24 : 10] What makes our wickedness so great is how great God is against whom we have sinned. And that you will see what you have done in the sight of the Lord and asking for a king for yourselves, rejecting the Lord as your king.

And verse 18. So Samuel called to the Lord. Can you picture that? Gilgal. The Sebeneser set up by Joshua.

This old gray headed man, a Nazarite, beard and hair never cut. Crying out to the Lord in front of the people.

That they will see how great God is and how great their sin before this holy God. And the Lord sent thunder and rain that day.

And all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. The Jewish historian Jerome wrote that I have never seen rain in June or July, the time of the wheat harvest in Judea.

[25 : 25] Someone said it would be like getting six inches of snow in Miami on the 4th of July. Never seen it. What makes it even more remarkable is that this was the Lord ordering it through his prophet that very day, just as he said he would.

Now, why is this so fear striking on these people? Well, these were farmers. Their wheat had been growing slowly. And now if you can picture those barley and wheat fields, the heads of grain are dry.

Some are beginning to harvest them already. And the Lord sends rain and thunder. If it's raining during the harvest, farmers can't collect the crop.

Mold starts to grow on these heads of grain. You'll lose the entire year's wages. The nation will now be crippled by poverty and famine.

And it's just a one day, just a display of the great arsenal available to the Lord, the creator of all. The message is clear. There's a creator, the Lord Yahweh, commander of the Lord's army.

[26 : 37] And he can control the rain and the thunder with his word. These are the weapons of destruction at his disposal. That's how quickly you can become weak, poor, hungry and get captured.

Do you remember the great threat of the wicked king of the Ammonites, Nahash? He besieged Jabesh. He cut off their supply lines. He was making them feel hunger and not have access to supplies and food.

Do you remember Saul's threat? It was that he would kill their oxen. Those very beasts of burden that pull the plow to plant the field.

The crops represent the security of the people. And those threats by Nahash and even Saul, they got the attention of the people. Don't you see how in just one day, using rain and thunder, the Lord's mighty greatness surpasses all the other threats these people could possibly fear?

Here's the one you need to fear. It's the Lord God. You fear man. Look at verse 19. All the people said to Samuel, pray for your servants to the Lord your God that we may not die.

[27 : 55] For we have added to all of our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves. Not only did we have bales in the land and ashteros, we rejected God as our king.

Please pray for us. We need God's mercy now more than ever before. We see his greatness finally. The bone has been broken. Now watch the Lord heal the bone that he broke.

See God's grace. Look at verse 20. So Samuel said to the people, when our sin is exposed, our flesh wants to do one of two things.

And I think Samuel addresses both. Samuel says in verse 20, do not fear. You have done all this wickedness. So, yes, you have sinned and God has exposed that.

He says, do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart and do not turn aside. For then you will go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver for they are nothing.

[29 : 06] When our sin is exposed, we want to do one of two things. We either want to try to pay for our own penance. You know, let me let me climb up a hundred stairs on my knees until they're bleeding to make right my sin and to show how sorry I am.

I need to pay my own penance and I do that out of fear. Or the second thing we want to do is simply give up and despair. And you see how Samuel preaches the gospel of God's grace, mitigating against both of those temptations of the flesh.

Do not fear. Don't respond trying to punish yourself now for the sin God has exposed. But also don't despair and give up.

Follow the Lord, he says. Follow him with all your heart. And just remember, don't go after those empty things. That's the gospel call.

When you repent, you follow him. And he is a kind and good and gracious king for you. The motivation, do you see?

[30 : 11] It's not fear of punishment from God. That's what their flesh wants to fear. But Samuel preaches to them God's grace, his long suffering, self pledging covenant faithfulness to his people.

Look at this glorious gospel in verse 22. The Lord will not forsake his people. Why? Verse 22.

For his great namesake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people. God's greatness and his grace. God's greatness and his grace.

It has to fill the hearts of God's people when he causes us to see them. There's simply no other response. The Lord will not forsake you.

Not because of anything in you or in me. But it's for his own namesake. He's attached who he is to having a people that he redeemed by grace.

[31 : 15] That's the grounds of our security and our assurance. And that's why we don't fear. And as one of his servants, as a broken hearted evangelist, as one who has experienced the blessing of repentance himself, Samuel says next in verse 23, addressing their fear.

Moreover, as for me. Remember, there was a wedge between Samuel and the people. Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord. In ceasing to pray for you.

And he tells them, beloved of God, I've been praying for you all along. The Lord won't let me stop now. And I do it out of love for the Lord.

But I will teach you the good and the right way. By God's grace, he's prepared a people that are eager and ready to hear that now.

With Christ as our king in the new covenant. Every believer is part of this great nation of priests. We get to minister and to pray in such a way.

[32 : 22] The Lord stirs the hearts of his people and we're told to pray continuously for one another. That's what we do as God's people, because we know how great the Lord is and we see his grace in our lives.

And that's what we pray for in the lives of those we love in the church. And there's a special charge and a continuity with Samuel's ministry. Do you see the two things Samuel has done?

It's a ministry of the word and it's prayer. And that's the very charge given to local churches, specifically to the elders that the churches have set apart for the ministry of the word in the prayer. See the continuity. The Lord loves to work through these same simple means with every generation. When we pray, we're joining our prayers to the prayers of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews tells us he ascended and he is seated at the right hand of God and he lives to intercede for his people. When we pray, it's because he's already praying for you. And he stirs our hearts to pray for one another, simply joining our prayers to his.

[33 : 23] The message from Samuel to the people and to us is do not live in fear. God's perfect love for you, it casts out all fleshly fear.

You don't need to fear man anymore. God is so much greater and you don't need to fear God's wrath if you are in Christ, because the judge and his anointed have declared you are pardoned. There's no fear of God's wrath in Christ, but we do live remembering. This is the last thing Samuel says in verse 24. Do not fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart for consider what great things he has done for you.

Remember these things that he has done. Remember Joshua's 12 stones. Samuel could tell them, remember my Ebenezer. Remember, he says in verse 25, if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.

The king and the kingdom will be bound together from now on. For the nation of Israel, this is not good news.

[34 : 38] What we see through the rest of redemptive history is that one king after another and one generation of people after another pull one another into sin and banishment and exile.

Until that glorious day in the fullness of time when God himself comes to be the great king and Jesus Christ as God's humble servant. He is the prophet and the minister that our hearts long for. We can look at a man like Samuel or Jason or you fill in the blank and point out so many faults in that minister. But we can look at Jesus Christ and no guilt could be found in him.

You won't take it from a man. That's great. Take it from Christ. Take it from him because no found can be found in that prophet. And Jesus Christ as the Lord's anointed king, he is lifted up as a judge with authority.

And Jesus Christ looks over his people that he purchased with his precious blood. And he says, I do not condemn you. Who can?

[35 : 50] You're cleared by my precious blood. Who can hold court against my bride that I purchased and I've covered up? And the Holy Spirit blesses the eyes of every true believer to both see our sin and to weep over our sins.

But it's joyful tears. We want to rejoice that the bones that God has broken have been healed in Jesus Christ. What a blessing we have in repentance.

And through his word, God addresses our sin directly, still continuously, purifying us, preparing us for heaven for eternity with him. What we deserve under Adam and under our own sin as the ruler of our own lives.

We remember these things. But we remember even more the greatness of God. God, the fear of man gets washed away when we see a minor glimpse of how mighty God is.

One more time from his word. I confess there are things at work right now stirring up a fear of God in me. And this story encourages me. And one day, the Lord can flash thunder and rain.

[37 : 04] And an entire nation's GDP could go away that quickly. Why would we put our hope in anything less than him and his kingdom? The Lord gives us reminders.

To trust in him more. He's the creator. He's the sustainer. He's the Lord of all.

And this very Lord is our gracious redeemer. Would you look one more time at verse 22? The Lord will not forsake his people for his great namesake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people.

Yes, you. Thomas Watson again. What a vast difference there is between the first covenant and the second. In the first covenant, it was if you commit a sin, you die.

And in the second, if you confess your sin, you shall have mercy. We are never more precious in God's eyes than when we are lepers in our own.

[38 : 09] We should be so quick to confess our sin because what we get in confessing it is more of his grace. We need to pray in the words of Psalm 51.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving kindness for your namesake, according to the multitude of your tender mercies on those grounds.

Blot out my transgressions. Dear brothers and sisters and friends hearing this today, if you can enjoy the blessing of repentance again today and maybe some for the very first time, then you can trust that it is Christ who holds you fast.

Amen. His destiny is secured and you are secured in him. As when our king, so goes his kingdom. Those he saves are his delight, precious in his holy sight.

He'll not let my soul be lost. His promises shall last. I'm bought with him at such a cost. That's why we know and we'll sing in a moment.

[39 : 21] That's why he will hold me fast. Amen. Let's go to the Lord in prayer and thank him for this wonderful grace we enjoy in Jesus. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.
Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.