

Sincere Repentance

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- [0 : 0 0] Thank you for that singing about a holy God. This passage tonight we will spend some time talking about the holiness of God, that He doesn't change in His view of sin.
- And we'll see a group of people who did not recognize His holiness in His life. And I really enjoyed the testimony of the night from hearing Juan preach and also Ben.
- So that Ben kept saying over and over again what was the next right step. It was a great way to think. You know, our God is always working and doing something. We should always be asking what He would have next for us.
- And then stepping forward in obedience to us. You know, Jacob in the Bible, the trickster, he encountered God and it changed his name. And he knew that God was unlike anything else that we could ever encounter.
- We have such a low view of God so many times. And we treat Him as if He is just man. If He is somebody that we can negotiate with. So we find here the children of Judah is that they're going to do that.
- [0 : 5 9] They're going to make a commitment and then they're going to go back on it. They stopped seeing God was holy. And that is somebody that you don't play with. They sell themselves maybe as too big to fail.
- You might have heard that expression before. Too big to fail. Sometimes corporations say that. Sometimes maybe nations say that. Sometimes we say that as Christians. Which is to say that I have too much going on.
- That it would be impractical for me to deal with the discipline of my sin. I am serving in this way. I'm leading a family.
- That I'm just too big to fail. God forbid we'd ever think like that. But we see an example of some people here that did not listen to God and His word. It's a sad message. It's when we get to a chapter and we know it's an encouragement.
- We know it's an encouragement for everybody. But I pray maybe this is an encouragement specifically for somebody. But when we get to a chapter of the Bible and it's a warning. I know it's a warning for everybody. Initially me that reads it.
- [1 : 5 7] But I know that it may be a warning specifically for somebody in here today. And for Judah and Zedekiah's day it was not the case of learning something new about God's covenant stipulations. But of carrying them out as a means to honor God.
- So academically this is a pretty simple passage to understand. But the challenge really comes in the area of obedience. I want to read to you verses 12 through 22 before I pray.
- In verse number 11 you'll see why we get to what I'm about to read. But in verse 11 it says, The voice of the joy, I'm sorry, verse 11 it tells, But afterward they returned and caused the servants and the handmaids whom they had let go free to return and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids.

They had let the slaves go, but now they had changed and they had brought them back. And this is what God says to them in verses 12 through 22. Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, And in the seven years let ye go every man his brother, a Hebrew, which had been sold unto thee.

And when he has served thee six years, thou shalt let them go free from thee. But your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ears. And ye were now turned, and ye had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor.

[3 : 25] And ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name. But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure to return, and brought them into subjection to be unto you for servants and for handmaids.

Therefore thus saith the Lord, You have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and every man to his neighbor. Behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the swords, to the pestilence, and to the famine.

And I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which have made before me, when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof, the princes of Judah and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs and the priests and all the people of the land which passed between the parts of the calf.

I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of them that seek their life, and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. And Zedekiah, the king of Judah and his princess, will I give unto the hand of their enemies, into the hand of them that seek their life, and to the hand of the king of Babylon's enemy, which are gone up before you.

Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and I will cause them to return to this city, and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

[4 : 50] Heavenly Father, Father, I ask that you give me clarity of thought, Lord, with your word tonight, as we see a people that you have been so good to, that you have given warnings to, that you have eternal promises for, that the word of God had been so clear to them, Lord, that they were insincere in their worship towards you, that they were insincere, Lord, in the areas of repenting of sin.

Lord, I pray that it's a warning to all of us, a till of caution, that you are a holy God, and we are thankful for that. Lord, I pray tonight, if there's someone in here today that needs to hear this warning, that they will listen with all of their heart and respond as they should.

To the rest of us, Lord, and I pray that they will hold in our hearts and be mindful of this as we ask you how to live out our days. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. So Judah had now faced the consequences of ongoing disobedience.

We've been in Jeremiah for a long time. It seems like we know that it's going to come. It's always the next episode. When is it where the shoe is really going to fall, and when is it going to happen?

How many chances do these people get? And we remind ourselves, how did they get here? Verse number 22 says, But I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return to this city. So the time is coming that they're going to bring back the armies.

[6 : 11] There had been a lull in the battle, and they're going to bring back the armies. And how did we get to this? He said, Eventually, it's going to come to a place where there will be, burn it with fire, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

There will be so bad that nobody could live there. And how did we get here? Ashley's ministry, Brother Ashley last week, his ministry was in spite of. Well, look at a couple of things.

In spite of the fact that God was long-suffering, they still sinned against them. Exodus 34, verse 6, And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin, that they will be in no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

He had established a relationship with them. He had went before them and said that he was merciful and long-suffering, but he was holy and that he would not allow sin in their lives.

And he was so clear to them. He was faithful in the ministry. They had a... Jeremiah was sent to them. Jeremiah 15, 15, O Lord, thou knowest, remember me and visit me and revenge me of my persecutors.

[7 : 22] Take me not away in thy long-suffering. Know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Several times Jeremiah had asked that the judgment that was going to come would be swift.

And he said, God, we know how these people are responding, but now the time has come. So in spite of the fact that God had been so abundantly good to them and been merciful to them and had made himself known to them and that there had been a prophet among them, they still continued to live in disobedience and rebellion.

This is a nation that has this glorious heritage. The laws were given to them, Exodus 31, 18, and he gave unto Moses when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, and it says, written with the finger of God.

He was going to tell them how to live. He was going to outline it for them. He was going to be their God. He was going to be their king. He had created this opportunity for these people.

We know later they want to have their own king as the other nations of the world, but they knew how to live without any doubt. You know, country after country has arguments about the Constitution.

[8 : 32] Many countries where our missionaries live will overthrow the government every so often and have a new Constitution, and you can argue about which one would be superior to another. These were people that had the laws written with the finger of God that it came directly from them.

They're without excuse to know what is right. Exodus 19, verse 4 says, These are people who have been freed from slavery themselves. You have seen what I did unto Egyptians and how I'd bear you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself.

And now, therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, that you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

These are the words that I shall speak unto the children of Israel. He had delivered them out of bondage, out of Egypt, having been slave people, not owning much of anything, and He had made them a people.

He made them as priests. He had given them a special place in this world and what He was going to do. He should have worked in their hearts concerning slavery. These ought to be people that understand what it was like.

[9 : 37] They had stories of what slavery was like. They had come from it. It should have made them compassionate in that manner. They had a land that was conquered by Joshua, Joshua 11, 23. So Joshua took the whole land according all the Lord said unto Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes, and the land rested for more.

Those of you that have studied the Bible, you understand what God did to bring them to this point, that you know how they had this land, the amazing things that God did to give them His land.

He seems to be pretty invested in these people having this land that He had given to them. Many battles have been won, much blood had been shed, it had been promised to them, and so you would think that the people would be able to remain, but they're not willing to hold on to their sin.

This kingdom was established by David. We know all the life of David and what God had done to prepare him and brought him up, and then he became the king, and then it was made magnificent under Solomon.

1 Kings 10.6 And she said to the king, this is the queen of Sheba, It was true report that I had heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believe not the words until I came, and mine eyes have seen it, and behold, the half were not told me, thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

[11 : 01] What an incredible history that these people had in their land, and being led, and receiving the law from God, and it got to a point where it had been magnificent. People in the world would come and see, and they would learn of the wisdom of Solomon, and all that God was doing.

And more so than that, said Chronicles 5.14, So that the priest could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God. What an incredible place that these people have been in.

What we're trying to build a case here is, God had been very good to these people. God had been very clear to these people. God had delivered these people. And with all of that, why would they not want to be faithful to Him?

Why would they not want a sincere relationship with Him? Why would they treat Him as we would treat any other man, believing that we can do what we want, and despising Him?

This relationship that had been built. Judah's shameful ruin at the hands of idolatrous Babylonians, that God would bring people in, that He would command, and they would return from their city and they would fight against them.

[12 : 07] These were not God-fearing people. A quote that I read this week by Senator Morris Shepard says, A nation that cannot preserve itself ought to die, and it will die.

Die in the grasp of the evil, it is too feeble to overthrow. They had not been addressing idolatry, and now they will be overtaken in it. They haven't been addressing the evil in their land, and now they're going to be overtaken in it.

And they would say that they would deserve to die if they were not going to do what is right. Harold Seidler, a pastor in South Carolina, he would often say this, and it may sound a little bit cold, but he would say, I heard that a church died today, and good.

If they were weak enough to die, then they should die. Doesn't that sound awful, but it's so true. Those of us that aren't willing to fight, that we're not going to stand up for what's truthful, that we're going to become overtaken, it's just a matter of time.

So these people would not stand. So they had plenty of excuses politically for why they didn't succeed. They had made alliances with people. They were willing to become allies with anybody, but they weren't going to work on the relationship with the God of heaven.

[13 : 14] They made a bad decision. But what was the real reason that Judah's now going to be overtaken? There's only two cities left, and that Judah's going to be overtaken is that their leaders didn't believe the word of God.

That they did not believe what God said, and they did not teach it. They did not live it as if it was true, that they did not believe the word of God, and they trusted their own wisdom.

And so their view here should have been wisdom that God is immutable. So they had this great heritage. They had all this great teaching, but what they did not realize or what they would not face is that God is holy and that He will not allow them to continue in their sin and that it's only a matter of time.

And even though He's been long suffering and even though they have a great history and even though they seem too big to fail, that God is not going to move. And that when you come against Him, that you will always lose.

And that what He says will always be true. So Jeremiah records a number of events that are going to take place in the final days of those that don't treat God's word in the way that it should be treated.

[14 : 21] The whole Near East is going to turn against Israel. Babylonian army, 2 Kings 24 verse 2, And the Lord sent against them bands of Chaldees and the bands of Syrians and the bands of the Moabites and the bands of the children of Ammon and sent them against Judah to destroy it according to the word of the Lord which He spake by the servants of the prophets.

And we see that it's coming towards them. All the countries that they were subjected to, vassal countries, they send everybody. They send the best of their army, then they send the best of every country that's against them.

Everything is coming against the children of Israel. But they have been, the Judah, they have been told, they have seen that it's coming against them but they would not obey Him. So we have cowardly leadership.

These leaders weren't able to recognize and to teach a hard and inconvenient truth. Jeremiah has been faithful in doing his job but look how they treat him in Jeremiah 38 verse 4. Therefore the princess said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city.

And the hands of all the people and speaking such words unto them. For this man seeketh not the welfare of this people but the hurt. What a cruel accusation against the only person that was speaking the truth in the whole story.

[15 : 34] As they were saying, this man is preaching truth. He doesn't care about the nation. He doesn't care about us. What he is saying is cruel and it's against us. What was Jeremiah been put in prison at time?

He had been put in a well. Jeremiah 37 verse 21 said he was given daily a piece of bread out of the baker's street until the bread in all the city was spent.

So now he is living. He's being called cruel and now he's only being fed a piece of bread a day. You know, being accused of being harsh and threatened to be starved has silenced many places, right?

I'm sure it's silenced many pulpits in America but it's also silenced many people, maybe in your family or with your friends or the people you talk to. It's one of the most evil things that this world does to us Christians is when they call us cruel.

Doesn't it? Because they just don't understand. Are there any people that should be more loving? Are we not speaking the truth in love? Are we not warning people of the judgment to come? That Satan has a way of turning things and people call Jeremiah cruel and so that's how it's going to continue.

[16 : 36] As he's warning against them that God is holy and that he should be obeyed. Everybody said that this man that was preaching against holiness which would be all of us in here I would believe in this day we should be preaching holiness and that God is good but he will not change and that he's loving and forgiving but he hates sin that he's accused of it.

So not only do we have leaders who are cowardly and will not speak for the truth but we have an insincere people. Verse 15 But you were now turned and done right in my sight. Verse 16 But you have now turned and polluted my name.

So they knew they said that we were going to release the slaves that we have been given here and so what they were doing is maybe if they were trying to appease or to bribe God. They knew that judgment was coming.

They knew that there was something that they hadn't been doing that they were supposed to be doing. So they made a show at doing what was right. According to laws of Moses a Jewish master had to free his Jewish slaves at the end of seven years.

Verse 14 He's very clear.

[17 : 46] Deuteronomy 15 12 There was no doubt in flipping through God's word or to looking at it that they knew what was supposed to be done but they won't do it.

Jews offer this act of obedience as a token to God in hopes that maybe he would rescue them in a miraculous fashion but it was insincere and things will change quickly.

You know the Bible teaches against man stealing or lifelong servitude. Normally slavery was chosen a mutual arrangement or limited duration highly regulated. Times of the Hebrews in Leviticus 25-39 in extreme poverty they could sell their liberty.

The father could sell the daughter as a servant into a home with detention she will eventually marry into that family Exodus 21 In the case of bankruptcy a man might become the servant to his creditors for a time said Kings 4-1 If a thief had nothing with to pay restitution it could go into servitude Exodus 22-3-4 God had outlined for them the rules in which they were to follow.

They knew what was going to be done but they denied it and God was not unclear in this area. So Jeremiah is going to preach to them those 10 verses that I had read to you already He had predicted a terrible death to them to these people all of them that were going to break the covenants that they had made these predictions were going to come true that it was going to become a desolation Verse 22 Behold I will command saith the Lord and cause them to return to the city There had been a short time where the war had stopped the battle had stopped and they're going to be called back but during that time is where they went back on the offer that they had been given of their slavery Where had this decision been made?

[19 : 33] It said that they made it before God That they had a ceremony in which they said God we haven't been doing right but we're now going to do what is right But then the circumstances changed and so then they began to change and they went back on what they had said towards God Who does that towards God?

A people that don't see him as a holy God They are insincere people who believe that God could be played that he could be tricked And so Jeremiah's message was very simple You knew what was right You said you would do what was right You did not do what was right And now you have to be disciplined for your sin And so there's this moment of decision between there and verse 15 and 16 where they had made a decision to do what was right just because it's right You know They're already Are they going to be sold in?

Are the captives going to come? Is the army going to come against them? None of that should have mattered to them All that should have mattered is we should do right because it's right But when the circumstances changed they were insincere and they went back With the decisions that we make are they insincere?

It will be shown in our willingness to follow through It would be easier and less convicting to draw a correlation between insincere nations and maybe an insincere nation we live in But right now you may know this but I'm not addressing the nation They don't let me do that Alright They let somebody do that They don't let me address the nation What they let me do is address my own heart from God's word and address you about the decisions that we make I remember flipping through a journal that I had when I was in college and I remember making a decision for the Lord and I remember flipping a few pages later and finding it once again and just making that same decision again There's several factors in place when that happens right?

When you want to do right but then you don't You're very much sincere when you make your decision about it but you don't place the things in life You don't set the accountability in place You don't do what's needed so that you continue in that But there's other times that we just simply go through the motions These people were insincere in the repentance that they had and it was shown in the way that they act Are you at this place in your life?

[21 : 41] So what they had was a couple cities left There's a lull in the battle and they think it's okay to retract on their promise from God But God didn't change They thought their circumstances had changed So even though Judah has fallen our God is still holy Isaiah 57 verse 15 There is no attribute of God that is more commonly ascribed to Him throughout the Bible The Bible leaves no doubt that God has no fellowship with sin He is completely separate He is completely unlike anyone else There is no one like Him Hannah when she's celebrating the fact she'll have a child 1 Samuel 2 There is none holy as the Lord for there is none beside thee neither there are any rock like our God There's no one like God That's what was sung here tonight She's celebrating There's no one like our God

He's absolutely pure 1 John 1 5 This then is the message which have heard of Him and declaring you that God is light in Him There is no darkness at all There's no room for negotiation There's no turning away to this That God is holy and pure and He commands that of us 1 Peter 1 14 As obedient children not fashioning yourselves according to the former lust in your ignorance but as which have called you as holy so you be holy in all manner of conversation but it is written Be you holy for I am holy that God is holy yes but we have been called to be holy as well There was times in the past we didn't know better we lived in our sins but now He has saved us and that He has given us knowledge of what is right and is wrong and that we ought to want to be holy with our lives We must either conform to God's character of holiness or suffer the consequences of sin There is no other alternative So I ask you where are you at today?

Are you acting in sincerity or simply by convenience? Galatians 6 7 Be not deceived God is not mocked For whatsoever man soweth that shall he also reap You see there was other reasons for them maybe to let their slaves go Maybe it was to appease God in the moment that happened before Maybe this one act of obedience will turn God's attention away from me and the judgment that is coming So I am just going to give this over to God this one act of obedience Or maybe it was to free up some responsibility Maybe it had become convenient They were having a hard time feeding their families so now they don't have to feed the slaves that they or the servants that they had had Or maybe they might be needed for the fight They say if we will free these people maybe they will be more likely to fight for us But why did they do what they do is shown when the circumstances have changed When it was going to cost them something they changed Is your heart empty the day even when your calendar is full for things of God Matthew 15 8 This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth and on earth me with their lips but their heart is far from me

In the New Testament that we are reminded that we can be just like these people of Judah who go through motions that have no sincerity in them They are not an act of obedience They are not an act of worship They just happen to be convenient for us You know there is so much good behavior that is convenient for me There is so much good behavior that is mutually beneficial for me that I should do those because of the way that I am being watched by other people the life that I want to live But what is the motive behind it If the circumstances were to change If nobody was to know about it would it still be convenient for me If there was going to be no consequence for me would it make a difference if everybody around me decided that they didn't have to do right in this area do I have to do it One of them is a conviction towards God and worship and another person is this person that just checks the wind and does whatever is going on We can't be Christians like that We must know that there is a holy God an insincerity And you may say is there an insincerity here?

Brother Paul really among us? I mean we are in church on Sunday night Who does that? Right? Could there really be insincerity among these people? Well I know of a really good church in the book of Acts and that there was a couple they were good people They had land and they had the right to do whatever they wanted with it They weren't obligated to hand it over to the property to sell it and give the money to the church but they said something that wasn't true something that wasn't sincere and God killed both of them the husband and the wife This is what A.T. Pearson says about this He says We must not infer from the rarity of such judgments in this word Speaking of Ananias and Sapphira or from the solitariness that God's mind had changed as to the exceeding sinfulness and hatefulness and ill desert of the sin He has thus rebuked A solitary example must stand as a lasting and terrible monument of what God thinks of that sin

[26 : 39] You know there's so many things that I don't understand about the story of Ananias and Sapphira but there's one thing that I know God hates sin and God hates when we're insincere because the key is holy So in this story when the consequences of sin seem to change their actions changed Repentance is more than I promise I'll do better Repentance isn't something we'll be doing something about sin it's admitting that we can't do anything at all The prodigal in Luke 15, 18 says I will rise and go to my father and I will say unto him Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee The prodigal knew what he was doing was more than just against his family but it was against the God of heaven and his actions have changed and he was sincere and he came expecting nothing He came knowing that he must submit his life back to his father and to his family and to the God of heaven A true hatred for sin causes you to take whatever steps necessary to avoid this sin What is a good way of asking yourself if you're being sincere?

If God has told you to do something he's made it evidently clear as he made this issue of slavery to them is what steps are you willing to take when you say that you repent of it? Is anything too drastic?

The Bible makes it very clear the actions that a person should be taking to remove themselves from the sin If you make provision to go back to it is that really sincerity or are you just changing for the circumstances?

There will be discipline for our sin even though there will not be a punishment for all eternity for the believer Hebrews 12, 6 For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth Remember what we saw about the wonderful heritage of the children of Israel They had been a chosen people He had a wonderful plan for them He had done wonderful works on their behalf They had an important role to play They thought they were too big to fail But God is unchanging He still hates sin Loving so much that He will not tolerate sin in our lives But He's ready to forgive Jeremiah's message was simple And so will ours be the night You knew what was right You said that you would do right You did not do what was right Because situations changed Nobody was watching It didn't become convenient anymore to do right And so you stopped And now there will be a discipline for that And so I would call on you the night as a warning Repent of your insincerity To come to God and say God when I came to you today when I came to you and said God

I wanted something I was just saying that I was remorseful because I didn't like the circumstances I was in But I never saw what I did was sin against the God of heaven No matter how long suffering He is and even though there may be a lull in the battle and you think you have two cities that are still standing strong the promises towards sin are true that He will discipline His children And so there's a warning for every one of us here tonight but maybe you would ask God if He has a specific warning for you tonight are you living knowing that you're sinning are you living rejecting what God has told you have you made fame the tips that saying that God that you're going