
Words of Truth

Exercising Contrition

By: Brian A. Yeager

What is contrition? The English word means: “the state of feeling remorseful and penitent” (New Oxford American Dictionary). When people err against the Lord they often fail at this important point in the process of repentance. True repentance begins with godly sorrow (II Corinthians 7:10). The Lord wants to see contrition in us if we were to err.

Such As Be Of A Contrite Spirit

The Psalmist wrote: *“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”* (Psalms 34:18 and Psalms 51:17). Isaiah penned these similar statements: *“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones... Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word”* (Isaiah 57:15 and Isaiah 66:1-2). We see a contrite spirit in such people as Job (Job 42:1-6), Josiah (II Chronicles 34:1-33), the “Lost Son” (Luke 15:11-32), and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).

There was a time in the history of Israel wherein God was so displeased that He said there was no remedy (II Chronicles 36:14-16). He sent His people into seventy years of captivity for their sins (Jeremiah 25:1-11). After that captivity, Daniel showed contrition.

“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy

judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name” (Daniel 9:1-19). If you keep reading, God heard and an angel came unto Daniel. If you find yourself in need of forgiveness, approach the Lord as we just read Daniel did.

Conclusion

We are commanded not to err (James 1:16). If you were to err, humble yourself and be afflicted in the process of repentance (James 4:6-10). Don't take the Lord's forgiveness for granted (Acts 8:5-24). What we saw in Daniel is what God foretold would occur when Israel was restored (Ezekiel 36:31). True repentance has to begin with seeing yourself as the unclean, filthy person sin has made you to be (Isaiah 64:6). This should not be hard, for if we understand we are unprofitable servants (Luke 17:7-10) that needed God's grace to be saved (Ephesians 2:1-10), we should already have a contrite spirit.