

Repent = Return, Remove, & Remain

1 Samuel 7

I. INTRO

- A. “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the one I love” - Come Thou Fount
 - B. Ever feel that way? Like you don’t want to walk away from the Lord, but your heart is so easily drawn, distracted, and derailed?
 - 1. You’re in good company b/c I think we all do from time to time (though, Lord willing, hopefully less and less as we mature and age)
 - C. The spiritual journey of a person is really a journey of repentance... returning
 - D. Ever since mankind was exiled from the Garden of Eden we have desired to return... our heart whispers, cries out to Eden - it echoes in our very souls
 - E. Jesus, in his finished work on the cross, makes a way for that return to happen through repentance and faith (“repent & believe...”), but repentance still continues in our daily lives
 - 1. Nobody’s perfect and we won’t be until Jesus takes us home
 - F. But we have a Good Shepherd. He leaves the 99 sheep to seek the 1
 - 1. In his kindness he calls us to return to him and then to remain
 - 2. He promises that when we remain we will bear fruit & find joy (Jn 15)
 - G. This chapter in 1 Samuel 7 is all about repentance.
 - 1. Under the leadership of Samuel, the Israelites repent of their idolatry and return to the Lord wholeheartedly.
 - 2. Samuel calls them to gather at Mizpah, where they confess their sins and commit themselves to the Lord.
 - 3. In response to their repentance, Samuel intercedes for them, and God delivers them from the Philistine threat by causing a great thunder that supernaturally confuses and scatters the enemy.
 - 4. This chapter becomes a picture of what life could look like with King YHWH in charge and God’s people following his lead
 - 5. They repent, yes, but the question is... will they remain?
- II. *[1] And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD. [2] From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.*
- A. The last few chapters, we have taken a detour to see the catastrophic collapse of Eli and his sons, as well as the exile the Ark of the Covenant in Gaza
 - B. When the people of Beth Shemesh first encountered the Ark, they wanted nothing to do with it. 70 of their young men died, and they sent the ark away
 - C. It was at this new location for 20 years! What had Samuel been doing over the last 20 years?
 - 1. Samuel had been doing what prophets mostly do in the OT → calling on the people of Israel to **repent** (1 Sam. 7:2–3).

2. A simple definition of repentance is “turning away from sin and turning toward God.” It involves a change of mind, heart, and behavior, leading to a transformation of your life in alignment with God's will.
 3. Samuel had been “preaching” sermons for 20 years, reminding the people of God’s character and commands and now... he saw inklings of change
 4. The fruit is evidenced in their “lamenting” after the Lord
- D. “Lamented” conveys the idea of sorrowful groaning, and this is in contrast to 1 Samuel 6:19
- a) *[19] And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow. (ESV)*
2. The groaning now, after 20 years, is “after the LORD,” implying not a groaning from loss but as a yearning for restored fellowship with God.
- E. This is an example of what the Apostle Paul says is the difference between WORLDLY SORROW & GODLY SORROW
1. *1 Corinthians 7:8 I am not sorry that I sent that severe letter to you, though I was sorry at first, for I know it was painful to you for a little while. 9 Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to repent and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. 10 For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. 11 Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such longing to see me, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish wrong. You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right.*
 2. Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow are two different attitudes towards wrongdoing and repentance.
 - a) Godly sorrow leads to repentance. Worldly sorrow does not.
 3. So what is GODLY SORROW?
 - a) **Recognition of Offense Against God:** A person experiencing godly sorrow acknowledges that their actions have offended God and harmed their relationship with Him.
 - b) **Desire for Spiritual Restoration:** Those with godly sorrow desire to be restored to a right relationship with God. They seek forgiveness and actively pursue repentance.
 - c) **Transformation and Change:** Godly sorrow leads to genuine transformation and change in behavior. The root changes, so the fruit changes.
 - d) Godly sorrow is NOT white-knuckling change; it is true contrition
→ true surrender → true repentance → true change
 4. So what is WORLDLY SORROW?

- a) **Self-Centered Regret:** Worldly sorrow is often centered around regret for the consequences of one's actions rather than genuine remorse for offending God.
 - (1) Ex: Judas felt bad once he realized Jesus was going to get killed and it led him to crushing sorrow, despair, suicide
- b) **Desire to Avoid Punishment or Shame:** Often, worldly sorrow may be motivated by a desire to avoid punishment, shame, or consequences rather than transformation and restoration.
- c) **Lack of Lasting Change:** Worldly sorrow may lead to temporary changes in behavior out of fear or guilt, but it has no power to change you. It IS just gripping the steering wheel and trying to not slide off the highway in an ice storm.

- F. Here's the reality: The Israelites couldn't change themselves. They needed to return to God and allow Him to change them, but they had been refusing
 - 1. You can't change yourself. You can't change your spouse. You can't change your kids.
 - 2. **The only one who can change you is GOD, and that begins with repentance**... so let's keep reading

III. *[3] And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."*

- A. I feel like these verses perfectly picture for us what true repentance looks like. **To repent is to RETURN, to REMOVE, and to REMAIN**
- B. Repentance is RETURNING to the LORD w/ all your heart
 - 1. We see this call throughout the Bible. It is the call to repent. It involves a sincere and heartfelt acknowledgment of wrongdoing, a desire to change, and a commitment to follow God's commandments.
 - 2. Even this desire is a spiritual gift from God. His kindness woos us
 - 3. Returning to the LORD also involves desiring His forgiveness, desiring a right relationship with Him.
- C. Repentance is REMOVING that which chases and distracts your heart
 - 1. Here we see it is the other gods. You can't return to YHWH while worshiping Ashtaroth. It's one or the other; no spiritual buffet
 - 2. Removing involves prioritizing God above all else and detaching ourselves from anything that competes with our devotion to Him. This could include sinful habits, worldly desires, or anything that distracts us from seeking and serving God wholeheartedly.
- D. Repentance is REMAINING with the Lord
 - 1. Direct (lit: Stand firm) your heart to the LORD and serve him only
 - 2. To remain or abide with the LORD means to maintain a close and intimate relationship with Him; it is continual dependence on His strength, guidance, and presence in our lives.
 - 3. The unseen aspect of this is a heart that is fixed on the LORD

4. The visual part of this is obedience to God's word, prayer, fellowship with other believers, and fruit that glorifies God.

E. When we REPENT (Return, Remove, Remain) God moves mightily...

IV. *[4] So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the LORD only. [5] Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." [6] So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah. [7] Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. [8] And the people of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines." [9] So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. [10] As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. **The LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day** against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel. [11] And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them, as far as below Beth-car.*

- A. A mustard seed of repentance... a small amount of faith... God moves
- B. When you cooperate with the Spirit of God instead of having him spend all his energy trying to convict you of where you are running away, that energy gets redirected (so to say) for your benefit and fruitfulness
- C. For 20 years they were resistant, but now they repent, and God routes their enemies for them
 1. How much heartache, pain, and suffering could have been avoided if they just repented a long time ago?
- D. But don't we do the same thing? We know something in our lives isn't really what the LORD wants for us, but we either don't want to give it up or don't know how
- E. The LORD's call to us is → **"Repent and believe.** Return to me and trust. Come to me; acknowledge that you need a savior; acknowledge that you can't do it. Stop trying to do it on your own and ask me for help. I can change you even though you can't change yourself."
- F. The LORD loves it when we come to him. He beckons us - return... In returning and rest with the LORD is your strength. That's where you will find true victory

V. *[12] Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, "**Till now the LORD has helped us.**" [13] So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. [14] The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites. [15] Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. [16] And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. [17] Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the LORD.*

- A. This chapter shows theocracy functioning as it should in Israel.
- B. Samuel, as the judge, leading under King YHWH, raised up by the Lord, continues to call the people back to fidelity to their covenant King.
- C. What we see here is that as the people follow the Lord, it goes well with them.
 - 1. This is evidenced in the Ebenezer Stone, which makes the next chapter all the more ridiculous when they demand to replace God as King with a human man
 - 2. If thus far the Lord has helped you, why would you turn your back on him?
- D. Such is the condition of humanity → a constantly wayward people, consistently being called back to repentance by messengers and prophets from God

VI. OLD vs. NEW

- A. In the Old Covenant, the nation's repentance had a direct effect on the health of the nation and whether or not they could stay in the land, be free from oppression
- B. In the New Covenant, post Jesus, this has transformed.
 - 1. Repenting and believing in Christ starts a wonderful journey of eternal life
 - 2. As repentant people, we live a life of constant returning, removing, remaining
 - 3. Instead of this resulting in freedom from oppression and physical blessings in the Land, it results in spiritual fruit and freedom from sin
 - 4. He has made us his people on the cross by faith. A repentant lifestyle is about intimacy, joy, love, etc
 - 5. Don't view any call today to repent as a burden... it's an invitation to abundant life

VII. REPENTANCE

- A. To repent is to return, to remove, and to remain. I don't know what your thing is:
 - 1. Maybe you need to come to Jesus for the first time, acknowledging your need for salvation and ask him for forgiveness and new life
 - 2. Maybe you're trapped in a struggle with greed, pride, sexual sin, gossip, anger, squandering your life on video games, or who knows what
- B. This is what I can tell you
 - 1. Return → Acknowledge that you are wayward and need Jesus
 - 2. Remove → Give up that thing that we love, that idol, over to God. We sin b/c we love it. We don't want to give it up, but God is saying, "Give it to me. I will gladly take it."
 - a) It's destroying you from the inside out. Let it go, ask Jesus to take it - he already died for it on the cross
 - 3. Remain → Your heart will want to wander back, but remain & fix your eyes on Jesus.
 - 4. We say that reading the Bible, prayer, and community are how you abide b/c these things help you fix your eyes and heart on Jesus, and that's what it really means to abide
- C. So repent today, friends. It doesn't make you weak. It doesn't make you terrible. It makes you a human in need of grace and mercy. Come up and I will repent with you. Let's find freedom in this place today.