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How Men Act When They Repent

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In Matthew 12:41, Jesus said, “The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.” According to Jesus, the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah.

You remember the story, don’t you? God had commanded Jonah, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me” (Jonah 1:2). Now Nineveh was not only a city filled with wickedness, it was also the capital of the Assyrians, hated enemies of the Israelites. Jonah didn’t want to go. He fled from God’s presence. However, after being given some quality time in the belly of a fish to reflect and pray, Jonah decided to obey God. Jonah walked through the city proclaiming the judgment of the Lord upon these pagan people: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4).

The people of Nineveh repented. They “proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them” (Jonah 3:5). When word came to the king of Nineveh, “he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.” He decreed that “neither man nor beast, herd nor flock” were to eat or drink and that “every one” was to “turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hand” (Jonah 3:7-8).

The text says that, “God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them” (Jonah 3:10). God can read men’s hearts. He knows more about what is going on in our heads than we do ourselves. But He did not need to read the minds of the Ninevites to know that they had repented. He “saw their works, that they turned away from evil.” When the men of Nineveh repented, nobody was left to wonder whether or not their repentance was genuine. Nobody was left guessing about their intention to stop committing evil. Nobody would have doubted they had actually repented of their sins.

We really need to learn this lesson from the men of Nineveh. We need to learn how to act when we repent. Repentance isn’t just saying “excuse me,” “my bad,” or “forgive me,” and then going on with our lives as if nothing happened. Repentance should produce real change in our actions. We are to “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (**Matthew 3:8**). I am afraid that too many of us think that our repentance should go unnoticed. We are incognito repenters! And while God hardly asks us to don sackcloth and ashes today, He does ask us to “do works befitting repentance” (**Acts 26:20**).

Let’s resolve to turn away from sin in our lives, and make sure that we behave in such a way that folks can tell that’s what we’ve done!

It Never Rains

John Gibson

While unmarried and living in Beckley, WV, I would occasionally receive a call from my good friend Alan Rich, also single at the time, to ask about playing a round of golf. Though I knew Alan would outshoot me, I always enjoyed playing with him and some of the other members of the church, but there were times I would question Alan about the advisability of driving all the way out to Grandview because of the threat of bad weather. After asking the question a few times, I came to know what the answer was going to be - “It never rains on the golf course.” If he had enough time off from work to play, we were going to play and a little rain wasn’t going to stop us.

But then there was the day we were at the Grandview golf course and though the rain had begun to fall, we continued to play. Eventually, I found myself trying to stand upright in a fierce wind, being pelted by hail as I prepared to swing my club, a.k.a. lightning rod, and there came a lightning bolt and clap of thunder that seemed to be simultaneous. Alan looked at the rest of us and said, "It's raining," and we all headed for cover.

As members of a local body we have obligations to God and one another. We might start with the exhortation to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..." (Heb. 10:24, 25). There is also the obligation to speak to one another and teach and admonish in song (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). When a church commits itself to authorized financial endeavors (2 Cor. 8, 9), each member should feel an obligation to contribute to the meeting of that need (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). Perhaps it could be summed up this way: "every joint" is to supply what it can and "every part" is to do its share in contributing to the building up of the body (Eph. 4:16).

Now what does this have to do with the story about rain on the golf course? There are going to be times when the most devoted saints, disciples who delight in worshiping God and being with their brothers and sisters, will not be able to assemble. There may come a time when health concerns render one permanently unable to gather with the saints, but I want us to honestly ask ourselves if we are approaching our worship assemblies as we should. Shouldn't those who seek first God's kingdom and righteousness (Matt. 6:33) be of the mind that "it never rains on Sunday or Wednesday"? Shouldn't it take, figuratively speaking, hail and lightning to keep us home instead of a few clouds or even a light drizzle?

Please understand that I do not question the legitimacy of all absences, for I know that sickness and failing health can prevent us doing what we most want to do, but I have observed through the years that when it comes to missing the assemblies of the saints, it takes a lot less "rain" for some than it does for others.

"For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God." 2 Cor. 8:3-5

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Improve Your Life

- Turn off the TV and read your Bible. The Psalmist said of the blessed man, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:2).
- Put down the phone and pray. I never cease to be amazed at how much time some people spend on their cell phones. Is all that talking necessary or profitable? "Pray without ceasing" (1 Th. 5:17). "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (Jas. 5:16).
- Get up out of bed an hour earlier on Sunday and come to Bible study. "As the door turns on its hinges, so does the sluggard on his bed" (Prov. 26:14).
- Cut down your credit card purchases and give. Give to the poor. Increase your contribution at church. "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed" (Prov. 19:17). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
- Change the conversation from sports, weather, and politics to spiritual things. Do that at home. "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:6-7). Do that at work, too. "He who wins souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30). - **via Manslick Road Speaker**