

- Starting a brand new teaching series today that I am excited about that will go through the end of June.
- Before I tell you what we're discussing, let me explain the motivation behind this series.
- There was a really feel good story in the news this week on Thursday. Three Korean Americans had been held from 1-2 years in North Korea. They had been sentenced to heavy labor in prison because of crimes against the state, even though in reality the offenses were minor if anything.
- If you have read anything about North Korea, you know that prison there is nothing like prison here. Terrible place.
- Yet this week, these three were released and came back to the US. While we are still waiting to hear more from them, they stated at the bare minimum that they were so very relieved and happy. They are, for the first time in a while, free.
- I can't imagine what that must be like.
- There is something about being free that is amazing.

- And yet . . . what I have observed in others and experienced in my own life is that many people do not live a life that is very free, even those that follow Jesus.

- Jesus, when talking to some crowds of people, said this:
John 8:36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

- In other words, Jesus is the key to freedom. And it is freedom that is amazing, wonderful and deeply satisfying. But our reality too often doesn't match.
- We struggle with the same sins and problems for years or decades.
- We confess the same thing over and over and never feel free. We have resolved to "do better" a thousand times.
- We spend more time depressed than joyful.
- We deal with conflict and problems no differently than anyone else.
- We worry constantly about all kinds of things.
- We struggle to find significance through our work.
- We feel compelled to work towards an "idealized" version of ourselves.
- And all the time we wonder if we are missing something.
- Our souls, that deep inner part of us, gets frustrated and does not feel altogether free.
- How do we live and experience that life of freedom that Jesus promised?
- So this series is called "Enemies of the Soul." There are things that war against our souls. That actively work against a life of freedom. Jesus spoke about them and what it looks like to live in freedom. So whether you are a follower of Jesus, simply curious or you are just here because of the child dedication, this will help you.
- We are going to explore some things that will point towards dealing with those things that prevent us from having a healthy, free soul.
- The first one we are going to examine is unrepentance.

- Mark was one of the first people to write about Jesus' life and he recorded for us how Jesus started his ministry life.

Mark 1:14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

- Jesus taught a lot of stuff during his lifetime. Why start with this? And how is repenting part of anything to do with good news? Repentance feels all religious and not at all enjoyable.
- Jesus was laying a foundational truth on which everything else was based.
- **THERE IS NO MOVEMENT IN GOD'S KINGDOM WITHOUT REPENTANCE.**

- We can't know God, we can't have freedom, we can't experience his joy, we can't have eternity with him, there is no true soul freedom – without repentance. Why is that?

I. We have a sin problem.

- Our culture has rejected this word and many people are offended if you tell them they are wrong and need to repent.
- This is partly because we have a faulty view of tolerance and a decision that most things are not right or wrong, they are just preferences. If I never did anything wrong, I would never have to repent. Why repent if you are right?
- Jesus started here because it is the root of everything. We have a sin problem.
- There is no one I have ever met who wouldn't agree with this. They might use different language, but they know the world is messed up. Even if they don't believe in God, they don't do all the things they think they should be doing.
- **THERE IS NO MOVEMENT IN GOD'S KINGDOM WITHOUT REPENTANCE.**
- First, you cannot even be a part of God's kingdom without repentance.
- In Jesus day, many of the Jewish people thought that simply because they were God's chosen people, and that they knew about God, they were good. They were assured of his presence and participation in all that he was doing on earth. They were the chosen people and they were in by virtue of their position.
- You will not and cannot know God unless you repent. You have messed up over and over in your life. Until you realize that you are a sinner and accept that Jesus died in your place and confess those sins, you will never, ever be free. Not in this life. Not after.
- Many people in this room have done this. You realized this. You confessed. You asked Jesus into your heart to be in charge. You are children of God. You are part of Jesus' family. But the principle of repentance doesn't stop there. Not only can you not be a part of God's kingdom without repentance, you cannot advance in God's kingdom without repentance.
- What do we even mean by using this word?

II. Repentance is changing your mind.

- When we hear the word repentance, we often think of groveling before someone, saying how wrong we were, how bad we were. It feels humiliating. It often feels unfair. We might think of the confessional booth.
- Don't confuse confession with repentance. Repentance usually includes confession, but it is not the same thing.
- The word used here is a Greek word "metanoeo" which it is a compound of two other Greek words which mean to modify your mind to think differently so that it results in changed behavior.
- Repentance is changing your mind, purpose and the way you think to bring you in alignment with God.
- Jesus says to repent and believe. Repentance means turning away from sin and turning in the direction of God. It affects what we think AND what we do. They are connected.
- Many people are sorry because of the consequences of their actions. They are sorry they got caught. They were sorry because they drove drunk and lost their license. They are sorry they lost a friendship. They are sorry because the IRS caught up with them.
- They are really sorry about what happened, not for the original action or behavior. True repentance involves a change of mind and behavior.
- It's like the person who wants to lose weight. They finally come to the place where they know they need to eat better, exercise, eat less, etc. They can even share it with their friends, talk

about it, admit they have a problem. But until they actually change what they do, nothing has really changed.

- But you will not change until you come to the place where you admit your sins and move to deal with them.

A. A soul with secrets is an unhealthy soul.

- Many, many people live with secrets. Secrets of things they have done or said. Secrets about what they used to live like. Things that they are ashamed of that they don't want anyone to know. This is a truth whether or not you believe in Jesus or follow him. Psychologists have done study after study. Secrets disease our souls.
- Repentance brings those things into the light. As long as they are secrets, they interfere with our relationship with God and with others.

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

- Marriage relationships – things are kept secret for years. The spouse lives constantly in the back of their mind how their spouse would react “if they only knew.”
- We want to go deeper with God, but we have never admitted to him what has gone on or is really going on inside, and so we don't experience the change and joy he promises.
- The enemy of our souls makes it terrifying to bring things into the light.

B. Pride and fear keep us from repenting.

- We worry what others might think if people found out our secret sins. We are trying to maintain an image which would take a hit if we repented. If I repented of my actions towards another person, I will be seen as weak or wrong.
- And so we justify not repenting with statements like, “I will if they will.” “They were more at fault.” “Compared to others, this is nothing.” “My friends told me it is OK.”
- Pride is the enemy of repentance. “*You won't get well unless you are more concerned with being good than you are with looking good.*” (Rob Reimer)
- The other thing is fear. Fear of what might happen.
- If I repent and turn my life over to God, he will mess up my life. He will ask me to do weird things. He will take away all my fun.
- If I told my spouse or friend what I had done, I would lose them.
- If I admitted what happened at work, I would lose my job. I can't repent and change, the financial ramifications are too large.

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord

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- Without it our souls will remain unhealthy, chained up, unable to be all they are designed to be.

III. Develop a lifestyle of repentance.

A. Cultivate a soft heart.

- God is calling us to himself.

Romans 2:4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

- It begins by taking all your sins to God. Admitting clearly, without justifying, all that is wrong. (BTW, this is for your benefit, not his. He knows!)
- We need to admit to God that we decided to act based on my desires. My ways. Not his.
- Ask God to soften your heart. When your heart begins to get crusty and hard, you need to ask God to work in you. When you are defensive, blame, etc. know that it is time to go back to God.

B. Take full ownership of your life.

- Too many people excuse, blame, justify, rationalize, or deny their sin.
- This is huge. I do this and I see it ALL the time.
- Owning your part does not validate anyone else's sin that has been committed against you.
- But YOU will never grow or be free if you do not take full ownership of your actions. If you wait for someone else to repent before you do, you will be frustrated and bound up.
- Listen what Jesus says:

Matthew 5:23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

- In other words, take ownership of your part. Confess to others. Confess to God. Make it right. Humble yourself and know what you did. Don't excuse or defend.

C. Live in the light.

- Find people to walk in the light with. Make a habit of dealing with your sins when they happen. Don't wait. If you have done wrong against someone, deal with it now. Go to God and ask him to show you regularly what is going on in your heart.
- Partial confession – partial freedom. (Full life confession)

James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

- Did you catch this? Sometimes the issues we face physically remain unresolved because God wants us to deal with the sin in our hearts FIRST.

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- But before we conclude, let me quickly deal with the issue of shame and guilt.
- If you have confessed the same sin over and over and over. If you have withdrawn from others and relationship because of how you are acting, there are shame issues.
- Shame is never from God. When we sin, he convicts. Conviction from the Spirit of God is specific, not general. It will be specific issues and actions, not general feelings of self-loathing.
- The Holy Spirit never attacks your identity. He is always loving and always restorative.
- God does not love your ideal self, your prettied-up self, your nice self, the self you wish you were. He is in love with the messed up self, the ACTUAL you.
- It's why at Hope Chapel we invite people to come as they are.

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- Secrets and unrepentance are damaging your soul.
- There is a sin issue and we need to recognize it, confess and change direction.
- We need to develop a lifestyle of confession. A life without secrets. A life where we take ownership of our stuff.

- Next week we are going to explore the other side of this equation – forgiveness.
- Jesus wants to see you free from sin and its power and effects.
- The only way to get there is to “repent and believe.”
- If you know you are mess and you have never brought it to Jesus, do that.
- If you did that but you still have sins in your life, things you have done, that need repentance, don’t hold onto those secrets. Don’t let pride or fear stop you.
- Unrepentance is an enemy of your soul. Get freedom today.