

Today, the doctrine of repentance is directly under attack. So-called preachers like Joseph Prince say that we must not focus on repentance because it depresses people, and that worship must be joyous, not moody. This shows their wrong understanding of the doctrine of repentance. Only when a person repents of his sins, he can then be reconciled to God, and can then worship God with clean hands and a pure heart.

David was not a perfect man, but he repented of his sins, and his repentance resulted in God’s blessings. Chronicles was written for those returning to Israel (after being exiled to Babylon) to encourage them in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, thus ending in blessing. This shows how God’s judgment is always with mercy, and can be used to fulfil His purposes.

1. Cause for Judgment (1 Chron 21:14)

God judges only when there is reason to. David was judged when he became proud of how Israel was thriving under his charge. When we think things are going well because of what we did, God will humble us.

God let David choose his punishment: famine, war or pestilence. 1 Chronicles 21:13 tells us that David chose to put himself under the mercies of God, and not men. So God sent a pestilence upon Israel (1 Chron 21:14). David showed his receptiveness to God’s judgment, in contrast to his initial pride in self.

Sometimes God uses godly people to wake us up out of our sin, but worldly friends push us further into the world. God’s chastisement is painful, but it saves us from more pain. We need to remember that God's chastisement is always done out of love. He makes no mistakes. He will never over-punish us.

2. Response to Punishment (1 Chron 21:15-17)

1 Chronicles 21:15 says that God “*repented.*” This is to help us understand God’s divine purposes. God never changes His mind. He simply shows mercy. David saw the angel of the LORD — God the Son — who carried out the punishment.

We must respond to God’s judgment by looking to Christ, even as we experience the rod of chastisement. We must realise that we have offended God. Repenting only because we are afraid of the pain, without turning to God, is not complete repentance.

David did not blame anyone for his sin. God will not test us beyond what we can bear. When our sin is pointed out to us, let us take full responsibility because we made the choice to do that sinful act.

3. Reconciliation after Judgment (1 Chron 21:18-19)

Now that the chastisement has fulfilled its purpose, David must be reconciled to God. He fulfilled everything God required for reconciliation. God turned the punishment into blessing. God required David to “*set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite*” (1 Chron 21:18). And David obeyed.

We need to repent genuinely through Christ, and not try to cover up our sin by serving more fervently. Let us confess our sins before God with a contrite heart, and ask Him to forgive us. After repentance, we can then make restitution as a testimony of our changed heart. May God help us.

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