

Lesson 95

TEXT Ezekiel 18:20-32; 2 Corinthians 7:9,10

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES 2 Chronicles 7:14; Proverbs 28:13; Mark 1:15; Luke 15:7

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that repentance is a godly sorrow for sin with a renunciation of it, and it is necessary in order to receive salvation.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. — Isaiah 55:7

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. — Isaiah 55:7

ANSWER TITLE: Which Direction?
SEARCH TITLE: Repentance

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The Prophet Ezekiel (Yehezkel, "God strengthens") was the son of a Zadokite priest. He was deported to Babylon in 597 B.C. with King Jehoiachin. The prophet's wife died the day the siege of Jerusalem began, 588 B.C. (Ezekiel 24:1,2,15-18). The prophet resided at Tel Abib, a town on the Chebar, a canal known from Babylonian sources which flowed from the Euphrates fork above Babylon, through Nippur, winding back into the Euphrates near Erech.

In the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile, Ezekiel began his prophetic ministry, continuing till at least April 571 B.C. (Ezekiel 29:17), his last dated utterance. He ministered

principally to those in exile, and had a large note of consolation in his messages, but he endeavored to show the people that they had been at fault, not the Lord.

Much is said in the prophets to the effect that Israel's captivity was due to the cumulative sins of preceding generations. The captivity generation, overlooking the fact that they were "worse than their fathers," were now trying to lay the blame on their fathers. The burden of our text is that God judges every man on his own individual and personal conduct. It is an impassioned appeal to the wicked to repent.

YOUR OPENER

Repentance

TEXT: Ezekiel 18:20-32; 2 Corinthians 7:9,10

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KEY VERSE: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ó
Isaiah 55:7

RESPONSES

1. The students should know that the penalty for sin is spiritual death and that the wicked must turn from all his sins. Discuss the fact that in the very beginning (Genesis 2:17) the Lord made that rule and it is still in effect today. See Romans 6:23.

2. Your students will note that there are several promises given in these Scriptures. In the key verse we have the promises that if we return unto the Lord He will have mercy upon us and that He will abundantly pardon. In our text in Ezekiel, it says if the wicked will turn from the sins he has committed and do that which is lawful and right he will surely live and not die, and none of the transgressions that he has committed will be remembered against him. In 1 John, eternal life is promised. In discussion, bring out that these benefits are not only enjoyed on this earth, but also provide an eternal hope for the future.

3. After the students have shared their thoughts concerning this question, point out the fact that the people John was speaking to had to prove by their lives that they had repented and were eligible for water baptism. When one repents, his actions bear this out. He will be doing things that prove his repentant spirit. When he has repented and been forgiven, he will go forth and sin no more.

When Jesus began to preach, His message was, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). What is repentance? Who is to repent? How does repentance affect an individual? God's Spirit causes us to understand that this message comes from Heaven and is directed to each of us. We cannot repent without God's help. So the Holy Spirit was sent into the world to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8), thus leading men to repentance.

1. Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin with a renunciation of it, and is necessary in order to receive salvation. What is the penalty for sin as stated in our text in Ezekiel? What does the prophet say the wicked should do?

2. The Spirit reveals sin. Without this enlightenment from Heaven one will never be able to comply with the call to repentance. One must first realize he is a sinner and that God's judgment hangs over his Hell-bound soul. Then the Holy Spirit assures him there is hope. You aren't doomed forever. There is forgiveness of sins through the Name of Jesus if you will repent. Using the text, the key verse, and 1 John 2:25, list the promises made to those who turn away from their sins.

3. Before Jesus came, John the Baptist preached the message, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). He preached with such power and anointing that whole cities in that area were emptied of their inhabitants as people went out to hear him. Some did repent, others did not. There were many scribes and Pharisees who joined the crowd presenting themselves as candidates for baptism but who had not repented of their sins. John rebuked them saying, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:7,8). What do you think John meant by the words in the 8th verse?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. Many people in Christian circles today believe that once you have given your life to the Lord you are eternally secure, and that there is no way you can drop out of fellowship with Christ. In our text in Ezekiel, find a verse that refutes this idea and explain, in your own words, what that verse says. Then find a verse in the New Testament which states the same truth.

5. Many times people like to place the blame for not being a Christian on someone else. They use this as an excuse to justify themselves for living an ungodly life. From our text we realize that the blame rests upon the one who sins. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." If they continue to excuse their ungodly lives, and fail to repent, they will find that sin has negative repercussions. Briefly tell how sin ruins lives today.

6. The Lord said that He had no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He loves all mankind. It is not His will that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. He didn't say, "join a church," or "subscribe to some creed," or "do the best you can to live a good life." He said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," (Luke 13:3). What provision did He make so that the wicked would not have to die? List several Scriptures that prove the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

7. Our text in 2 Corinthians 7:9 tells us that Paul rejoiced because the people sorrowed to repentance. What is the difference between being sorry and having sorrow to repentance and what is the outcome of both?

8. Jesus said that He came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance. We should understand that repentance was necessary under the Law (of which John the Baptist was a representative), but it is of no less importance under the dispensation of grace (of which Jesus is a representative). Many people think that God is so merciful that they can come to Him any time they are ready. We are warned in the Bible against presuming on the mercy of God (Psalm 19:13). Read what is said about Esau in Hebrews 12:17, and then explain why it is dangerous to put off the call of the Lord.

4. The student should understand that verse 24 refutes the idea of eternal security. We want to make sure the class understands that the righteous man who turns away from his righteousness and returns to sin will have to pay the penalty for sin. There is no such thing as eternal security as it is taught in many organizations today. The one who goes back into sin becomes a sinner and will have to repent again if he expects to enter Heaven. There is no such person as a sinning Christian. Verses supporting this in the New Testament would include Matthew 24:12,13; 2 Peter 2:20; and Revelation 2:4.

5. It should be obvious to the students discussing this question that without repentance one cannot receive the gift of forgiveness from sin. Therefore, the person who decides to remain a sinner will not only experience tremendous negative consequences here on earth, but will also end up eternally lost. Some of the negative consequences may be broken homes, alcohol addiction, drug addiction, and the love of riches without satisfaction.

6. After the class has shared their answers to this question and Scriptures they have found, help them realize that we have a Redeemer who paid the penalty of death. In realizing this, we have an obligation to come before our Redeemer in sorrow and with a repentant heart in order to know what it means to be pardoned from the penalty of sin. In addition to our text, some references for this question could be found in John 3:16, Acts 4:12, and 2 Peter 3:9.

7. After discussing this question with your class, they should realize that being sorry makes one feel bad and can eventually bring some so physically low that they could die. On the other hand, godly sorrow for sin unto repentance brings joy and the hope of eternal life. Even in Heaven there is joy when this occurs. Luke 15:7,10

8. Allow your class to discuss the different reasons why it is dangerous to put off the call of the Lord. One of those reasons might be that we do not know when the Lord will come. He could come at any moment. We do not know when the Spirit of God will make His final call to our souls. We do not know when our physical lives could end suddenly by means of an accident or illness. Do not hesitate as a teacher to express your concern that the members of your class know they have made their peace with God before it is too late. Offer to pray with anyone who would like to stay and pray after class time. Allow time for this to happen because this is the whole purpose for which we are gathered in Sunday school.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What does it mean to repent?

Why and of what do we need to repent?

If we repent, what will happen?

Why do even good people need to repent?

What made Dave, in our ANSWER story, realize he was on the wrong ship?

What are some things that might make us realize our need to repent?

Why do some think just believing that Jesus died on the cross is enough to be saved?

Why do you think repentance is important to gain salvation?

Do you think we can cling to our sins and still be saved? If we don't repent, what will be our reward? If we do repent, what is our reward?

In the steps to becoming a Christian where does repentance fit in? (Answer: conviction; repentance; forsaking sin; believing; receiving salvation.)

Does being sorry for your sins make you a Christian? Explain.

What is the difference between repentance and salvation?

Sometimes a person may say he is sorry and not really mean it. Do our parents always know when we mean it? Does God?

If we repent of our sins can we sin again? Explain.

THINGS TO DO

Materials needed: Cut a cross out of red paper; letters S, I, N, O, cut from black construction paper; letters H, I, M, cut out of purple construction paper; an empty box wrapped as a gift; and a flannel board. Put letters S I N on the board and tell students, "This is a picture of you and me before Jesus came into our hearts. We are the ìlî in the middle of S I N." Using Romans 6:23, explain that the wages of sin is death—eternal death. Talk about wages we earn. Then show the gift and tell about the gift of God being eternal life. It's a free gift, but we must be sorry for our sins and repent, asking Jesus into our hearts in order to receive this gift. God gave His best gift—put up cross and place the letters S I N on it. God's

Son took our sins on the cross, place O over I making it S O N. After Jesus comes into our hearts we are in H I M, the Lord Jesus. Place letters H I M on board.

Have two students in your class act out this situation: Someone took your sweater, then brought it back and said he was sorry. You forgive him. But the minute your back is turned, he takes it again! You begin to wonder if he really had been sorry. Use this skit to illustrate that when we give our hearts to the Lord we must really be sorry. We tell the Lord we are, and promise if He will save us we won't do bad things again. We must mean what we tell Him, and He will forgive us.

Use your Bible and a bell. The Bible is like a bell to the unsaved. It sounds an alarm, and is a warning to tell them of the dangers of evil that lurk ahead if they don't repent and turn from their sins. It warns them to change their course and keeps tolling even when they don't listen. When they do listen and get saved, the Bible becomes a joy bell, because there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15:10). It is also a dinner bell, ringing for us to come and dine with Jesus to feed on His Word.

Answers for ANSWER

Are You on the Right Ship?

The sea of life is a big place. Is your ship headed in the right direction? The H.M.S. Victory is headed for Glory. How can you be on that ship? The answer is in the sea path. Starting with the letter R, write down every other letter. Go through the path twice. Start with J the second time. All the letters will be used. Use the lines below to write on.

REPENT AND TURN FROM YOUR WAYS
 AND GOD WILL SAVE YOU.
 ASK JESUS TO FORGIVE YOU. TURN
 FROM WRONG. BELIEVE. BE SAVED.