

True Repentance

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon explores the concept of true repentance through the tragic story of King Saul, highlighting the importance of genuine confession and obedience to God.

Duration: 1:02:15

Topics: "True Repentance", "Heart Change"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Saul and his lack of true repentance. The preacher emphasizes that Saul's confession and repentance were not genuine, but rather a hypocritical act. Saul only confessed his sin with his lips, but his heart remained unchanged. The preacher warns the audience not to fall into the same trap of superficial repentance and highlights the importance of true repentance that reaches the depths of one's heart. The sermon also mentions how God had already revealed the truth to Samuel before he met with Saul, indicating that God sees through insincere repentance.

Transcript

Lord Jesus we thank you for your working. Lord, work by your Holy Spirit. Touch each and every heart in our midst.

Even those who are not here, Lord, wherever they are, please visit them. And we thank you for your mercy that we are able to meet together in this manner. Work in a marvelous way, oh Lord.

Amen. Today we read from 1st Samuel. Chapter 15.

Sorry, 15. 24. Verse 24.

Last night I was in a struggle about which text I was going to preach from because I already had a sermon prepared from another text and then the Lord laid on my heart to leave that for another occasion and we look at this one. Then Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship the Lord.

Now the heart of the matter, the crux of the matter is this. For today, to confess sin truthfully or rather one could say true repentance. Saul's story is tragic, painful.

This Saul, this 1st Saul, his story really breaks one's heart. Not like the last Saul we hear of in the Bible who became a disciple of Jesus. We need to take a very careful look in examining this that we don't fall into a similar trap or hole.

Here we find the 1st Israeli King Saul. He looked wonderful. He was tall, attractive in looking upon him.

He had a good appearance and here we find the repentance and the way that he confessed his sin. A great man of God Matthew Henry said that Saul arrives here with a garment of repentance but it wasn't true repentance. It was only a dress of a penitent person.

And his remorse and repentance was not complete. It was just halfway. In fact we can say it was a hypocritical repentance not a true repentance.

His confession and repentance was really something poor. To such an extent that the prophet of God Samuel had to be very careful and and go into great explanation about the situation to him. He used all the wisdom and might he had to open this man's eyes to his wrongdoing.

He didn't see it. He wasn't conscious of it. He thought everything is alright and he didn't see that he was on the way of destruction heading, falling straight forward into death.

God had sent Samuel to Saul telling him to go and destroy utterly all the Amalekites, all the men and women. Every child, not a soul, nothing should remain. They were to kill the cattle, the sheep, every breathing thing, not a single thing was to remain.

We are shocked to hear that. It stuns us that God could handle them with such anger. The righteous God, the just God, to take such harsh measures and then instructing Saul not to show pity on anyone.

And do you know what had caused it? Years ago, when the children of Israel had been redeemed and rescued out of Egypt on the way to the promised land, the Amalekites resisted them, fought against them. And God said, I do not forget the memory of their having fought against my people Israel. Judgment came over them because something they had committed in the past long ago.

They stood in the way and fought with God's people and they never put that right. And then God's judgment came down upon them. No matter who it is, no matter how pious, how religious and how spiritual you are, see to it that everything in the past has been put right.

So that you have made peace with God concerning that thing, because that was the reason why they should have been utterly, completely destroyed and annihilated. That should bring us down on our knees and make us pray, God, have I sinned against you in the past? And I haven't made peace with you concerning that thing. Of course, they didn't go against God, put their finger in his eye, but they went against his people.

And God said the same thing. He said to the second soul, why soul soul? Why do you persecute me? He didn't persecute Jesus. He persecuted his disciples.

God identifies and expresses total solidarity with his people. And if you fight against them, you're fighting against God himself. Now that things got corrupted with Saul, what was the reason? Now moving on from the Malachites to Saul himself.

That soul should fall into the sin. What it brought it about? God had said to Saul, remember when you were still small in your own eyes, but as time went by, you became haughty and you considered yourself to be great in your own eyes. Actually, if you examine carefully, you'll find that something got in between the king and Samuel.

You get the impression that something got in between them and that Samuel, the prophet, was sort of a nuisance to him. He would have got on better without him. Samuel had come to him, giving him this instruction to annihilate the Amalekites.

He said, O king, remember that the Lord sent me to anoint you, to be king over all of Israel, over all the tribes of Israel. And now heed carefully and diligently all the words of the Lord almighty. For Saul was always being hassled by Samuel.

That's what he felt. It was like a mongrel dog snapping at the ankles. God, this is just these two points.

By the way, we can't go into depth. There are so many things in this chapter. It's an impossibility to touch on all the different points.

These two are just in passing as an introduction to why judgment came upon the Amalekites and upon Samuel. But now let's begin with the first point of this message. The others were by way of introduction.

Now we're taking a long story and we're just summarizing it. When Saul came back from destroying the Amalekite tribe, he met with Samuel. So when Samuel had arisen early and Saul met with him, Samuel was there waiting for him, Saul started by saying, blessed be the name of the Lord.

I've performed the commandment of the Lord. Now here was the king returning, feeling that he has completed and has accomplished all that was commanded. Actually before that, Saul had built for himself a memorial of the victory.

And then Samuel meets with Saul and Saul says to him, blessed are you of the Lord, for I've performed everything that the Lord told me to do. He doesn't see or he doesn't want to see that he has not completed, has not done what the Lord has told him to do. Samuel responds by saying, what then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears? And the lowing of the oxen which are here.

Now listen attentively for we're speaking about repentance. True repentance entails true confession. And he meets the prophet wearing a garment of repentance.

The repentance went as far as his lips and never reached his heart. And then he says, Lord, or he says to the prophet, but the people have left the fatted, the fat cattle or the best of the sheep and oxen. For they want to sacrifice to the Lord, their God.

Samuel says to Saul, be quiet. And I will tell you what the Lord has said. Last night when he spoke to me, one Samuel, one Samuel.

For the Lord, before Samuel met with Saul, the Lord had already shown the previous night what the situation really was to Samuel. So so when Samuel tries to point out by saying, what is this noise of the livestock? In other words, he's saying that it hasn't been done. Saul jumps and avoids that point by saying, well, it's the people, they wanted to do it and they've kept it for a sacrifice unto the Lord.

The prophet Samuel says, stop for the Lord has spoken to me last night about you. And then the King said, speak on. Samuel goes on and says, when you were little in your own eyes, were you not the head of the tribes of Israel? Verse 17.

And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel? Did not the Lord send you on a mission and say, go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites? And fight against them until they are consumed or exterminated? Why did you not heed the voice of the Lord? But you've taken the plunder of this tribe. Now, listen to Saul's reply. He rejects Samuel.

He contradicts him by saying, I have heeded the word of God Almighty. For I have gone on the mission, which the Lord commissioned me to go on. And I brought back a king of Amalek.

Do you detect here that Saul in his confession is actually excusing himself? He's just defending himself as well. In his pride. And being obstinate.

One who humbles himself, if they have sinned, a person who is a true repentant, just honestly confesses his own sin. He doesn't try to pass the buck and excuse himself or defend himself and make others to have the blame. Few can truly humble themselves and say, I have sinned.

I have sinned. God is not looking for explanations or excuses. He wants to hear from you that you have, you say, I have indeed sinned.

I have. So I ask you, when you repent, do you repent in God's way or in Saul's way? In the confession of sin, do you confess with godly sorrow as you're supposed to do? Or do you try to explain things, justify yourself? You defend yourself. You're actually fighting for yourself.

Resisting Samuel. He contradicts what Samuel says and says, but I have done what was said. It's the people who did this.

They're the ones who persuaded me. By saying that they want to bring a sacrifice to God. Whereas God had said utterly exterminate.

The easy things he makes right. Like it was easy for them to kill off the sick and the diseased livestock. But that which was fattened was what they kept.

It's easy to sacrifice what's easy to sacrifice, which doesn't cost something. But that which is costly, you hold back. It's thin.

It's not worth a lot. It's not in a good condition. Don't say you've sacrificed something to God and that thing is worth nothing.

Anybody can do that. But that which is good and fine. That which is costly is in your eyes.

That's another thing. Samuel responds by asking, do you think the Lord has great delight in the fat of burnt offerings and sacrifices as in instead of obeying the voice of the Lord? And then he says, behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. And then Samuel continues.

Finally, by saying, because you have rejected of the word of the Lord, he also has rejected you from being king. And that stung his heart. This was the frightening point for him.

At this point Saul said, I have sinned. We have all know. But do you detect what was in his heart? Position.

To be king. To be great. Remember that when Samuel spoke these words, he didn't say he has cast your soul off.

He said he has cast off your position as king. But that touched his heart. Then he cried out, I have sinned.

I have sinned. So you see what was in his heart? Position. Being a king.

Being great. And when he heard that you've lost that position, then he cried out, I have sinned. Saying, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and his words.

For I feared the people and obeyed their voice. I don't know how truthful this is. But while on the point, it is a terrible danger to fear the word of man.

It's an awful danger to have the fear of other people. That can bring us into hell and cost us heaven. Because you listen to people instead of the voice of God.

What people have said becomes greater to you than what God himself says. Let us examine ourselves young and old here. Where do we stand regarding this point? Was always me.

The second soul was quite different. He said I did not consult with flesh and blood. When the Lord Jesus got hold of me.

Now though God had said through Samuel, destroy utterly everything there. Here he arrives with the very king of Amalek. Not somewhere.

Now when this king then met with Samuel. He pleaded and appeared to be so sorry. Yet he had been merciless before.

Never granted a request for mercy to others. And had the courage or the boldness to resist God's people. He begged him.

He had begged the king that is Saul. He begged him. Said pity me.

And eventually I don't know what happened. But Saul then brought him along. He listened to the plea of this the greatest enemy of God.

Of whom it was said utterly annihilate the Amalekites. And here he allows their chief representative. The one who was utterly evil whom God had said kill.

To get away with it. You might find yourself in the same position. Taking the side of those who are enemies of God's work.

Being friends with those who resist the work of the Lord. It can even be a co-worker here who does that. Paul when there was a situation in the church of such immorality.

He said to the church regarding this man. And his stepmother whom he has been immoral with. Identify with me as I hand him over to Satan.

That his body would be destroyed. So that his spirit would be saved. Do not be the friend of the person who is under the curse.

God had said destroy. God had destroyed. God had said you destroy utterly.

Then instead of doing that. He befriends this enemy of God. This king.

Was it Samuel? Then something happened. Of which we never heard before and since. That a man who is in a high position.

That he himself takes the sword. And kills the person. But Samuel the prophet of God himself took the sword.

When he saw the cheek. When he saw how daring this man was. He drew the sword and killed him.

He himself. That is an unheard thing. But here the servant of God did it.

To show his king his folly. And evil. Feeling sorry.

For a person. Who's an enemy of God. This should shake us to the very core of our being.

For this man Saul had failed to truly repent. And truly be on the way of God. As God had said it should be.

He can't repent as he should. Because there was. There were evil things in his heart.

And in his life. Verse 30. I have sinned.

But please honor me. Before the elders. Do you see this man is not on the way of repentance.

He is not understanding. He doesn't grasp. He doesn't understand at all what true repentance is.

He doesn't even know. What it is all about. Because there were wrong things in his heart.

And in Luther's word he knew about it as much as a donkey. About a harp. A musical instrument.

May God grant that every one of us will realize what it's about. What true repentance is. But if we are obstinate God.

But if we are obstinate, haughty, arrogant. The grace of God simply passes us by even if we're standing right next to the man of God. So what was really important to him? His position.

His pride. It is terribly dangerous for God resists the proud. And in our text it says that the sin of rebellion is as the sin of idolatry or witchcraft.

Being stubborn and resisting when God speaks to you. And you resist what he says. You disobey him.

Woe to you for it's as if though you've gone to a witch doctor. You've consulted a witch doctor. And to be obstinate includes self-will.

Self-will. Self-will. You know what that is? Your own self-will.

It's a damnable thing. This repentance, this service is an opportunity to carefully examine yourself in the light of God. Saying oh God what is it? What do you say in heaven about me? Saul was the king but so

what? God was the one with real authority.

And no one should ever have the audacity to offend he who is king, God. We live in a time of human rights. Rights.

The right of a child. The right of a woman. But if here you are even in charge of a thing you've got no right to disobey God's word.

Even if you're responsible for that. You've got to bow to God and see that every word, every action and every thought is according to the word of God. We have humage doctrine.

And he admits finally. The last point. Sorry.

The point loctrina. I've sinned. But honor me.

Honor me though. He said I've transgressed but honor me before the people and before the elders. That I won't lose my reputation.

I want to worship the Lord. Come with me that I worship the Lord. You say I've sinned.

And then you forget about worshipping God in the future. And what you'll do in the future. That cancels all your plans.

And you stand before God as a sinner and say I have sinned. And you wait upon the Lord. Not I've sinned.

Please forgive me. And I want to go there and I want to do this and that. That's all spiritual humbug.

You are not repentant. You are a hypocrite. While excusing yourself.

You are already making your own arrangements about how you're going to serve the Lord. What you're going to do. That you just in a circus.

You just playing around. May God grant that every child of the Lord knows what true repentance is. If you don't do nothing more than a clown.

With an orange on his nose. A red orange. Nothing more than that.

If you don't understand true repentance. You can get nowhere. You have no future.

You're going nowhere. And you will never have peace with God. You'll never be with the Lord.

You're lost. And you'll be destroyed. You are believers.

You who are not believers. Understand what true repentance, true godly repentance is all about. Let us bow our heads.

Lord Jesus, you have said that when the Holy Spirit comes. He will convict the world of sin. Will lead us into all the truth.

Lord teach us. What true repentance. What true confession really is.

For Lord on that point. We either are saved or condemned to hell. Work our Lord and lead us into all the truth.

By your word and by your Holy Spirit. Amen.

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