

Action of the Heart

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving God genuine heart action, not just outward religiosity, in order to experience transformation and move from a life of stagnation to a life of freedom and power.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 27:8, Luke 18:10, James 4:8, Revelation 3:1

Topics: "Heart Transformation", "Repentance"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, emphasizing the importance of heart action in our relationship with God. The tax collector experienced a transformation because he humbled himself, prayed, sought God's face, and turned from his sinful ways, while the Pharisee remained unchanged due to his lack of inward action. Bieber highlights the need for believers to engage in genuine heart action, including humility, prayer, seeking God's face, and repentance, to experience God's transformative power in their lives and in the church.

Transcript

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven; but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner'.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:1-14 Two men went up to the temple to pray. One came down a changed man, the other came down exactly the way he was when he went up. To say that the tax collector is now a changed man means much more than he now has a better attitude, or a better outlook. Something happened between this man and God.

He was justified, made right. He came down to his house under the blessing of God in a way he wasn't under the blessing of God when he went up to the temple. There is a hand guiding him now which wasn't guiding him before. There is a strength inside him and a holy protection around him which will be there even if he has to pass through fire... or walk through the door of death itself. God is now at work in this man's life with power and he knows it, and the demons know it. Every life he touches will feel the impact.

The Pharisee on the other hand merely "went to church." He did his religious thing... felt good about himself. "God, I thank thee that I'm not like those evil doers," but he was as far from God as ever... nothing happened. So why did God do something for one man and not for the other? - Both went to the temple. - Both apparently prayed. The Pharisee was a man of action outwardly. Why he even belonged to Vic Tanny and jogged three miles a day. And he was very active in religious affairs.

But inwardly he was a dud... nothing was happening inside him. Inwardly he was a block of ice... a vacuum... nothing was going on in the heart. The tax collector on the other hand, had something going inwardly. As he stood afar off and averted his eyes and beat his breast, he was acting inwardly. - His heart was taking off its shoes. - His heart was bowing down. - His heart was reaching out for mercy. - His heart was turning away from sin. And to this action of the heart God responded, as he always does.

A stream of life from heaven rushed into this man and changed him. The parable is preserved for us in the New Testament because it is a word from the Lord Jesus to his church... to this church. When believers come together to worship and pray and go away basically unchanged... when very little, if anything redemptive is happening among them, if healings are rare or perhaps only imagined or pretended, if the life of God is frustrated among them, it's because they're going at it like the Pharisee... outward action.

But inwardly that block of ice isn't melting. On the other hand, when believers come together to worship and pray and go into action inwardly, when the ice melts and the heart begins to humble itself and cry out and turn from its pride, then the Spirit of God moves in that place... - lives are healed, - eyes are opened, - chains break, sinners turn from their old ways and start walking in the mercy and holiness of God. On his side, God is already acting. But this action has to be met by something from our side.

Jesus is the action of God. Jesus is God coming down and draining off our sin, our guilt, our hardness of heart, our bitterness, our pettiness, our childishness, our egotism, and our self-pity, ... draining these things into his own heart and suffering an awesome death, like the death of a sacrificial Lamb to wash it all away. And now this same Jesus who took our sins to Calvary and died under their weight and rose from that grave comes into our midst, draws near to us, speaks to us., breathes a welcome over us, holds hope out to us, promises life to us... right now.

But to receive what he brings us, to be touched by this miracle, there has to be some action on our side... heart action! When the ice block in our heart starts to melt, God moves and things happen.if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. II Chronicles 7:14 This promise was first made to Solomon after he dedicated the temple in Jerusalem.

"This is the place where all this will happen... if you come up here and humble yourself... pray.... seek... turn." Centuries later the Pharisee and the tax collector of Jesus' parable came to the temple. And this promise applies to us who have come to the final temple: Christ himself. Jesus is our temple. We are gathered in his name. Now we have to bring him some action of the heart. "If my people who are called by my name will... " 1. Humble themselves... heart action, 2. and pray... heart action, 3. and seek my face... heart action, 4. and turn from their wicked ways... heart action, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land."

We know we need help from God in our own lives, and we know we need food from God to feed those hungry sheep. What we need we're going to have. God will transform this church into a burning and shining light a million times brighter than it now shines if we will give to God, as the tax collector gave to

God, some genuine heart action. 1. Humble ourselves. 2: Pray. 3. Seek God's face. 4. Turn from our wicked ways. 1. "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves," ...humble ourselves before God... become children...

A lot of us are holding out on this humbling business. It's the last thing we want to do. We don't want to come down from our high horse and eat humble pie. But that's the first step... nothing happens until we do... until we say, "Lord Jesus, I submit to you. I put myself under your authority. I commit myself to obedience. I've been trying to have it my way for too long. I repent of my way. I bow to your way. I take off my shoes. I worship you... not my will, your will!" 2.

"If my People who are called are called by my name will pray," ...God is calling this church to be a praying people... a people; - who get up in the morning praying, - walk through the day praying, - lie down at night praying, - gather together praying, - go forth into the world praying. Prayer is to be for us as it was and is for our Lord Jesus... our second nature. Praying for the healing of the land, the restoration of Jerusalem, the church, for laborers for the harvest. You learn to pray by praying, - in season and out of season, - when it goes easy and when it goes hard.

Don't you know that there's a sifting going on in the Body of Christ and the prayerless ones are dropping through? 3. "If my people who are called by my name will seek face," When thou saidst unto me, "Seek ye my face," my heart said unto thee, "Thy face Lord will I seek." ...my heart said. The heart reaches out, the heart pursues the light, the heart cries, "Lord, I want to dwell before you. I want to live in your presence. I want to behold, worship, obey your glory. Not the glory of man... not the admiration of man... your glory!

Take my life, my everything. O God, I seek your face." 4. "If my people who are called by my name will turn from their wicked ways," ...wicked ways? Mediocre perhaps, half-hearted perhaps-but wicked? Our half-hearted ways are wicked in the sight of God and they are death to us. We need to turn from them... repent of them. "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead.'" Revelation 3:1-2 "Turn from your wicked ways... your half-hearted ways."

"He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." When we leave this place today each of us will leave either as the tax collector or as the Pharisee. We will go down to our houses justified or we will continue to carry that block of ice where there should be a flame. The week that lies before us will be filled with life or death... freedom or bondage... depending on whether our hearts are moving or stagnant before God.if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. II Chronicles 7:14

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