

We rejoice to see God's grace at work in David's life after his terrible sin -- first with Bathsheba in adultery, and then murdering her husband Uriah. God sent Nathan the prophet with the convicting authority of the Holy Spirit. He was divinely enabled to speak just the words that would slay David's sin and bring the adulterous king back to his senses. David agreed with the Spirit of God's verdict on his life by declaring, "I have sinned against God." Nathan the prophet was then able to pronounce God's saving grace of repentance: "The Lord has taken away your sin."

All this deep heart-work is the purview of the Spirit of God alone. He alone can "convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8-11). Let's explore further in this week's notes how the Spirit of God restores sinners, demonstrating and fulfilling the promise of our Good Shepherd in Psalm 23:3:

He *restores* my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Mon/Tues: Read Psalm 23:3

The Spirit Restores Souls

One of the first demonstrations of the presence of saving spiritual life in a sinner is that there is a deep but tender work of conviction in the heart. On the Day of Pentecost, the Lord demonstrated the effectiveness of the promised Holy Spirit when the crowd who heard Peter preach "were cut to the heart," begging Peter to show them what they should do to be saved (Acts 2:37). This is the saving grace of repentance, which is defined so clearly in our Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q. 87. What is repentance unto life?

A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.

Meditate and Pray: In our prayers for evangelism in the local church and missionary efforts to spread the good news of Christ throughout the world, let us pray that God would grant this grace of repentance to sinners. We are not to hope in slick programs, organizations, or human wisdom. Our hope is that God, in His sovereign power, would grant sinners who come across *His* path the saving grace of repentance. Sing about this hope using hymn # 74 (*Trinity Hymnal*):

1 God is working his purpose out
as year succeeds to year:
God is working his purpose out,
and the time is drawing near;
nearer and nearer draws the time,
the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea.

2 From utmost east to utmost west,
where human feet have trod,
by the mouth of many messengers
goes forth the voice of God:
"Give ear to me, you continents,
ye isles, give ear to me,"
that the earth may be filled with the glory of God as
the waters cover the sea.

3 March we forth in the strength of God,
 with the banner of Christ unfurled,
 that the light of the glorious gospel of truth
 may shine throughout the world:
 fight we the fight with sorrow and sin
 to set their captives free,
 that the earth may be filled with the glory of God as
 the waters cover the sea.

*4 All we can do is nothing worth
 unless God blesses the deed;
 vainly we hope for the harvest-tide
 till God gives life to the seed;*
 yet nearer and nearer draws the time,
 the time that shall surely be,
 when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
 as the waters cover the sea.

Weds/Thurs: Read Psalm 23:3; Jeremiah 9:1-3 & 1 Peter 1:10-12

The Sadness of the Prophet

The word, “to restore” is a great Old Testament word for biblical repentance. This word is translated “to return” or “to turn back” and in Hebrew is “lashuv,” derived from the root, “shuv”. In noun form, the word is “teshuvah” (repentance).

The Old Testament word occurs frequently in the writings of the prophet Jeremiah, sent by God to urge God’s people to “return” unto the Lord. Time and again he urged God’s people to repent – all without success. The result was that this prophet also declared judgment during his ministry of more than forty years! Listen to Jeremiah’s grief from this lack of repentance on Judah’s part in Jeremiah 9:1-3:

Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears,
 that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!
 Oh that I had in the desert a travelers' lodging place,
 that I might leave my people and go away from them!
 For they are all adulterers, a company of treacherous men.
 They bend their tongue like a bow, falsehood and not truth has grown strong in the land;
 for they proceed from evil to evil and they do not know me, declares the Lord.

Meditate and Pray: Thank Jesus that through all the years of the history of God’s people in the Old and New Testaments, He has been a faithful friend to those who had all others forsake them because of the Word of God they proclaimed. There is a fellowship in suffering for the Word of God which these prophets had with Christ. Doesn’t Peter speak of such fellowship? “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, *inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ* and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.”
 (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Friday: Read Psalm 23:3; Deuteronomy 10:15-17 & Isaiah 59:14-16**God Only Wise**

God has the power to restore our souls, by doing *Himself* what we in our hardness and sin refuse to do. For example, Moses challenged all of God's people to "circumcise their hearts," meaning "humble yourselves," "repent of your sins," turn away from the idolatry of your fathers, and serve me as the One True God who brought you out of Egypt. The Law speaking through Moses had every right to lay this obligation of whole-hearted repentance and obedience upon God's redeemed people, brought out of Egypt with God's mighty saving arm (Exodus 20:1-2).

Yet the perversity of Israel's hearts (like our own) is to refuse to circumcise our hearts unto a reverential, obedient frame. The result is what God observes centuries later in Isaiah 59:14-16:

Justice is turned back,
and righteousness stands far away;
for truth has stumbled in the public squares,
and uprightness cannot enter.
Truth is lacking,
and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

The Lord saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no justice.
**He saw that there was no man,
and wondered that there was no one to intercede;**
then his own arm brought him salvation,
and his righteousness upheld him.

Meditate and Pray: Moses gave a command to Israel to "circumcise their hearts" in order to drive them to seek from God what they could not do on their own. Give thanks that God steps in with His power to do what mankind, weakened by sin, could not. This hymn underlines that salvation is from the Lord and His mighty power alone: # 38, *Trinity Hymnal*

1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, O Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

2 Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

3 To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small; In
all life Thou livest, the true life of all; We blossom
and flourish as leaves on the tree, And wither and
perish, but naught changeth Thee.

4 Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render: O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee

Sat/Sun: Read Psalm 23:3 & Hebrews 10:15-18**His Voice Gives Life**

What, then, does it look like for the Lord Himself, with His own hand, His own effort, His own plan, to work salvation for us? He does not need the cooperation of fallen mankind. How does He “restore our souls” when we cannot produce one iota of soul-change within ourselves?

The answer is as follows:

- 1) He sustains and fortifies His original Word, spoken through the prophets, taking up their message (which He inspired originally) and applying it with new, effective, saving force.
- 2) He points us to the Cross as the place from which the grace of repentance flows.
- 3) When speaking of God’s soul-restoring work, the essential key is this: He speaks directly, commanding us to “turn from sin.” His voice speaks through the written Word into our hearts.

Let’s focus on this third reality. We see God *personify His Word*, using it to directly speak to us of salvation, for example, in Hebrews 10:15-18.

Here is what Geerhardus Vos says about God’s direct speaking to us in the book of Hebrews (quoted by Nick Batzig, Alliance of Confession Evangelicals article, 11/10/15: *The Internal Witness of Scripture*):

... In the Epistle to the Hebrews, God is everywhere represented as the speaker in the Old Testament. Only one passage, Heb. 4:7, names the human instrument, and even that one says *God saying in David*. The author goes so far as to say that it matters little who the human author may have been; the main thing is that God said it. Elsewhere he says, *Somewhere someone has testified*. Of course the author of Hebrews, thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament as he was, knew who that someone was, but still he does not name him.

Thus God by His Spirit *bears witness in our hearts* about the reality of forgiveness of sin in Hebrews 10:15-17, using His indwelling Holy Spirit to give us direct assurance that His promises apply to our lives.

Meditate and Pray: Use *Trinity Hymnal* #335 as a prayer, asking God to speak personally to each of His own when it comes to the great salvation Christ has purchased for us:

1 Gracious Spirit, dwell with me:
I myself would gracious be;
and with words that help and heal
would thy life in mine reveal;
and with actions bold and meek
would for Christ my Savior speak.

2 Truthful Spirit, dwell with me:
I myself would truthful be;
and with wisdom kind and clear
let Thy life in mine appear;
and with actions brotherly
speak my Lord’s sincerity.