

Teaching #1568 - Sunday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012, 10:00 a.m.

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## LISTENING TO THE WORD IN FOUR STEPS (continued)

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** - "All Scripture is *breathed out by God* and *profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*, [17] that the man of God may be competent, *equipped for every good work* [When you pick up your Bible why do you do it? Are you hoping for some mystical encounter with God? Or do you realize God has an assignment for you?]."

Last week we began looking at listening step number two - *reproof*. But we didn't actually give specific attention to what the Bible says listening to reproof will do for you. It's amazing to compile even a short list of specific promises attached to the virtue of listening to reproof. That's our target today - to see what God says embracing reproof will do for you:

1) HEEDING REPROOF STOPS THE PROGRESS AND DAMAGE OF SINFUL ACTIONS IN OUR LIVES

**2 Samuel 12:1-7** - "And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. [2] The rich man had very many flocks and herds, [3] but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. [4] Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." [5] Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, [6] and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." [7] "Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul.'"

We've all heard the saying, "There's no use crying over spilled milk." And we all know the truth of that little saying. Once something is done, it's done. There's no point wringing your hands over something no one can do anything about. Just get over it and get on with it.

Why does God go to all the trouble of getting Nathan to confront David with his sin? It's already done. Why bother rooting up the past? Is God just out to rub David's nose in his sin? Is God just trying to take all the joy out of David's life?

No. He's trying to put the joy *back into* David's life. God has nothing but a positive goal in bringing such a strong reproof into David's life. And the text actually *points* that fact out:

**2 Samuel 12:7** - "Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul.'"

This is *not* just God's way of reminding David who's boss. That point certainly is good for all of us to hear freshly from time to time. But there's more here than just that. God is pointing out a *purpose* that He has for David - "Remember, you're not just king by accident. I put you here for a purpose. But that purpose is never going to be filled on the rebellious path you're taking now. You are heading for disaster if you continue in rebellion. *I have so much more in mind for you than this!*"

That's the *goal* of realized reproof in my heart and yours. And we almost *never* remember this when we're feeling the humbling sting of God's reproof in our lives. Reproof never *feels* initially healing. It feels *damaging*. It feels *belittling*. So it's very important that we put our emotions in check and take the time to analyze reproof with a *Biblical perspective* so we don't cause a spiritual miss-fire in the good God wants to produce when we are objects of His reproof.

The *fruit* of the Holy Spirit's reproof through the Word are always more beautiful than the *appearance* of that reproof when it bumps into our own plans and decisions. That's what this wonderful account from the life of King David - the man after God's own heart - is all about.

If you and I don't linger over genuine reproof we will, as Christians, usually just lightly claim God's *forgiveness* without cauterizing those same sins that will mess up our lives in the future.

2) REPROOF OPENS UP OUR LIVES TO THE ONGOING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Proverbs 1:23** - "If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you."

Take note when you see that word "*behold*." That means we are likely to give too little attention to the point being emphasized. Or we'll read it quickly and think God is just exaggerating.

The life lesson here is ignoring reproof on any *one point* shuts the doors to the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit at *other points*. Heeding reproof in one small area prepares the whole heart for further cleansing, restoration, and transformation.

The Holy Spirit only works in hearts first sensitized to reproof. Stubbornness quenches the Spirit. Don't mistake the *pain* of God's reproof

for the absence of the Holy Spirit. Heeding reproof **makes more room** for the Holy Spirit's involvement in the ongoing transformation of your being.

### 3) HEEDING REPROOF GERMINATES THE LIFE GIVING POWER OF GOD'S WORD AFTER IT'S BEEN STUDIED

And it will ignite the life and power of truths taken for granted because they never seemed relevant to my life. James makes this important connection:

**James 1:21** - "Therefore **put away** all filthiness and rampant wickedness and **receive** with meekness the implanted word, which is able to **save your souls** [We'd usually say we're saved by the atoning death of Jesus. Not by our Bibles!]."

As I read God's Word, it will expose the things that need cleansing, re-thinking, and re-gracing in my life. James says the only proper way of digesting Scriptural truth is with **meekness** and **humility**. The hindrance to receiving spiritual transformation from God's Word isn't usually **ignorance**. It's **wickedness**. More precisely, it's wickedness that is **defended**, even against the light of God's revelation. Heeding Scriptural reproof ignites the power of God's Word.

### 4) HEEDING REPROOF RESTORES FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNION WITH OUR LORD

**Revelation 3:19-20** - "Those whom I love, I **reprove** and discipline, so be zealous and repent. [20] Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone **hears** my voice and **opens the door**, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

The irony of this process, of course, is that while reproof **feels** like anything **but** a restoration of fellowship with our Lord, in fact, it is the **only** way true fellowship can be renewed. By dodging the inconvenience or discomfort of reproof we might **think** we are avoiding any upset with Jesus, but, in fact, the opposite is the case. **The inner peace we experience by avoiding reproof is a deadly peace**. It's the silence of God turning His back to us instead of His face.

In these words from Jesus to the church, the **heeding of His reproof** is likened to the **opening of a door**. This really isn't a **salvation** verse. It's a **hearing reproof** verse. These words are given to **believers in the church**. They're about how Christ's church **listens** to His Word. And they have to do with the **restoration of spiritual health and intimacy of fellowship**.

### 5) HEEDING REPROOF PAVES THE WAY FOR GOD'S CORRECTION IN OUR LIVES

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** - "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

We will look into the building block of correction in detail in our next study. Correction is the flip side of reproof. Reproof deals with exposing the **negative**. Correction deals with **replacing it with the positive**. But correction won't set into our souls properly or permanently until reproof has had its proper time and place.

This whole process of heeding reproof with a humble, tender, patient heart is really at the core of the blessing Jesus attached to **mourning** - "**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**"

Comfort follows proper mourning. That's why in the Old Testament God actually called for the people to **act out visibly the kind of heart they were to carry inwardly when reproved by the Lord**. The people were actually told to **put on "sackcloth and ashes."** There was to be nothing light or giddy when the Lord reproved His people.

Now, was God just trying to make them all miserable? Was He just some divine Kill-joy, working hard to take all the fun out of life? That's not it at all. But God **did** understand, and wanted **them** to understand, that we all tend to make too little of **reproof and consequent repentance**.

So God called these people to actually **act out** the heeding of reproof, not because there was any magic in the smudging of soot on the face, but because putting on this **costume** of reproof would make it almost impossible to forget the prominent place it was to have in their walk with God.

Don't rush over this part of the process. Sin should make you feel bad. You aren't likely to forsake many sins **just out of duty**. You will experience far more victory over self and the flesh as you **linger over the damage sin does to wholeness of life**, and, even more important, **to the glory of the One who redeemed you by His own blood**.

Like all good medicine, reproof tastes bad going down, but it brings life to your soul!