

SOUL FOOD - The Things You Need To Know About Your Bible - Pt 12

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WHAT EMBRACING REPROOF WILL DO FOR YOU

Last week we launched into a study on Biblical **reproof**. It's the hurt that heals. And the reason we're taking two weeks on this topic is we don't **like** reproof. And our religious culture has infected all of us with the idea that, because God is **love**, it just follows logically that His dealings with us should always feel **positive**. And reproof **doesn't** feel positive. Therefore, it can't be good for us.

But, if God's Word is true at all, reproof **is** good for us. Overwhelmingly good. The Biblical evidence here is so lavish I didn't want to just rush over it last Sunday. I was amazed at the accumulated list of life-giving benefits that come from receiving the Lord's reproof:

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.'"

This is a fascinating story. Nathan has to expose King David's sin in Bathsheba. But in order for David - the man after God's own heart - to **see** his own sin, Nathan has to put David's sin, at least

temporarily, into another person's life. And when David sees his own sin in the life of someone else (the rogue in Nathan's imaginary tale) he's enraged by it - proving we're all somewhat blind to the same sins we hate in **others** when they pop up in **ourselves**.

The whole point of Nathan's story is even King David has to be made **ready** to heed **reproof**. God sets up Nathan's assignment because God wants David to respond with the same **sensitivity** to his **own** sin as he does to the sins of **others**. And God wants to use Nathan's parable to do this for David because God knows nothing good is going to unfold in David's life until he learns to embrace **reproof** for his sin.

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.

So 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.'"

Don't miss the point in these words. 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.

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."

Here is one of the great, life giving promises in the whole Bible. I know of no other verse that so plainly spotlights the sheer blessing of hearing God's word of reproof. In fact, this verse states that **ignoring reproof** on any **one point** shuts the door to the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit on **other points**. Heeding reproof in one small area **prepares** the whole heart for further cleansing and restoration.

While He doesn't take the time to mention reproof specifically, Jesus shows the **need** for it in the parable of the four soils. Some seed, says Jesus, lands on **wayside soil**, or the **pathway**. And because of this it never germinates. And what is needed for that soil to be productive, of course, is simply that it be **tilled - broken up**. And **heeding reproof** is what breaks up our hard hearts. If you want **roses** you have to **plant** them. If you want **weeds** you don't have to **plant** anything. If you want weeds all you have to do is never **till** the soil.

God plants His Spirit in sensitive hearts. 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**

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."

As I read God's Word, it will expose the things that need cleansing and replacing 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**.

But even that isn't quite it. More precisely, it's wickedness that is **defended**, against the light of

God's revelation - against the ***reproving voice of the Spirit through the Word***. That's what neuters the life-giving power of God's Word. 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 pain or discomfort of reproof we might ***think*** we are avoiding any spiritual upset, but, in fact, the opposite is the case. ***The inner peace we experience by avoiding reproof is a deadly peace.***

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

So remember God at the door of your life. Where do you want God to come into your life right now? Where is His healing presence needed? And when you've answered those questions, remember, ***reproof*** is how He knocks on your heart.

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.** 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!