

2/25/13

Week 9

James: Betty and I want to welcome you to *LIFE Today*. We just celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary.

God bless you, honey! You are really something!

I want to thank you for the prayers that you have lifted to the Lord in our behalf. Many of you know that we ended the year... three days after Christmas we lost our youngest daughter; we lost Robin, age 40, mother of three teenagers to cancer. We're going to talk about Robin on Thursday. We're going to let you meet her and know her because of the impact that she's made; not only on our lives but on everyone she ever touched because she was a living illustration of what Jesus called "abundant life." You'll want to know her.

As a matter of fact, you can go online and read a song that Randy sang to her the night she went into her last sleep. And also, a poem that his teenage son wrote about her; I've never seen anything like it. You can find that online and we also have it available to you to send it to you if you'd like to have it because we believe it will bless people with a broken heart.

Here's one of the things Betty and I have seen. We never knew the weight of a broken heart like we experienced on the second day of this year, to have our daughter's funeral. What we realized is we were lifted up into the presence of God with his power but also by the prayers of our family and our friends. We know many people have a broken heart; they don't have that circle of family and friends. We want, in many ways, to be that to you, that is our desire.

We are also celebrating this year 50 years of ministry. We have a special anniversary Celebration Conference, really calling for the awakening that we believe is coming, that is necessary, the 18th through the 20th of July and the conference will be at our

wonderful church, Gateway, in Southlake. I want you to mark that date down right now. And you can go online, LifeToday.org and get more information and even register for it but you need to plan to come. We're going to be ushered into the presence of the Lord.

Now we're going to show you during this anniversary year, from time to time, we're going to go back, we're going to remember some things where God has just poured out his blessing.

Now this is a message that you're about to see that was preached back in the 70s and it went nationwide. I can remember 13,000 people called in to receive Christ at the close that we prayed with. But I also got another call; I got a call from evangelist Billy Graham who is a very close friend. As a matter of fact, I've shared with you, he's the reason we even prayed about going on television years ago, 40 years -- really, his burden that got us to consider it.

But he called me when he heard this message. It aired prime time nationwide. He said, "James, it is the greatest gospel sermon I've ever heard." Well, I was curious enough to wonder why he had said that and went back and watched it. I want to share it with you. It is on the subject of repentance. I pray with all my heart it blesses you.

Begin video clip:

James: What is repentance? Without it there is no redemption. What is it?

Listen to the words of Paul in Second Corinthians chapter 7, beginning at verse 8 -- Second Corinthians chapter 7, beginning at verse 8. Listen closely.

I made you sorry with a letter, and I don't repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry... Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance: for you were made sorry after a godly manner, that you might receive damage by us in nothing. For Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

What is repentance? Paul said, "I'm grateful that you have repented after a godly fashion. You repented unto salvation. The sorrow of the world worketh death."

What is repentance? "I'm glad you repented," Paul said. "I'm glad that you have repented in a godly fashion."

What is repentance?

First of all let me state very clearly what it is not. Repentance is not remorse. It is not simply being sorry for your sins. It is not simply saying I'm sorry. For you see, the expression of the average person who says "I'm sorry" is simply an expression of the fact that they're sorry the consequences of their sin finally overtook them and they're sorry I got caught. That's the testimony of the average person who says "I'm sorry." Now this is the sorrow of the world.

And Paul said, "The sorrow of the world worketh death." It is not enough for you to say, "I'm sorry." "I'm sorry." "I'm sorry." The prodigal son said, "I'm sorry" but he could have stood in the pig pen and cried aloud, "I'm sorry I'm in trouble. I'm sorry I left home. I'm sorry I lost my wealth. I'm sorry that sin has ruined me. I'm sorry. I'm sorry" -- until he died in the pig pen. "I'm sorry!" It is not enough for you to say to God, "I'm sorry." "I'm so sorry!" "Oh, I'm sorry!" It is not enough. That is not repentance. For what are you sorry? You're in trouble. It's not repentance. Our attention as human beings is focused on self: I'm in trouble. Self: I'm in trouble. That's not repentance -- that's remorse.

Second, repentance is not regret. Regret is not repentance -- regret is not repentance. Saying, "I wish I hadn't done it" -- that's regret.

Have you ever said, "I wish I could live my life over?" You can't. You can't live it over. And regret is not repentance. You can spend your life saying, "I wish I could do it over. I wish I could live my life over. I wish I had another chance. I wish I could start over." You can't live it over but you can get a new life. You can have a spiritual new birth -- new beginning. But you can't live it over. And you can say "I'm sorry that that happened and I wish it hadn't." That's what Judas did.

The scripture tells us concerning Judas that he was sorry. In the Word of God we find these words in Matthew 27, verses 3-5.

Judas, who betrayed Jesus, when he saw that he was condemned he repented himself. And he brought again the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priest and to the elders and he said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood. I'm sorry! I wish I hadn't done it."

That's not repentance and the Bible says he went out and hung himself. And you can know that a man who lives in rebellion against God never repented. He killed himself. He was sorry he did it. He regretted that he did it but that is not repentance.

Reform is not repentance. Some of you have said, "I'm going to start over and live right. I'm going to live right." That's not repentance. You stop today and say, "Now I'm going to live right. I'm going to do everything right. I'll go to church, and I'll be good, and I'll give money, and I'll treat people right." It is not repentance -- that's reform. It's not repentance. Reform is works.

And the Bible says: For by grace are you saved. See, not of works, lest any man boast. You're not going to be saved by your works. By grace...

And if you reform, and say, "Now I'm going to do all the right things," it is not salvation.

Last, repentance is not religion -- it is not religion. Now religion has become the chief substitute in our world for repentance. Religion is becoming increasingly popular. There are religions all over the world.

Let me ask you this. If religion is the answer, if religion could change your life, if religion could meet the need in every heart, why the cross? Why Jesus? Why the savior?

Religion is a curse. Religion keeps people from God. Religion stands between people and God.

You say, "That doesn't make sense." Satan is subtle and he's going to tell you what you need is religion. You need to meditate. You need to study the different religions of the world. All it will do is confuse you. If you want to get as confused as a termite in a yo-yo, you study religions.

[Laughter]

Religion is not the answer. It really isn't. It never has been. They had religion when Jesus came. As a matter of fact, the greatest problem Jesus ever met was the problem of religion.

Our churches are filled with people who have never repented -- all over America. They come but they've never repented.

A black pastor said when asked the question, "Explain the visible and invisible church doctrine." He said, "That's simple. Sunday morning, divisible church; Sunday night, the invisible church."

[Laughter]

Sunday morning our buildings are filled with empty people. They've never repented. They're here but they've never repented. Christians are always fighting among themselves. What's wrong? Many of them aren't Christians; they've never repented. They became religious.

I became religious -- nothing happened. I knew God wasn't in my life. I knew I was empty and so many people are exposed to religion.

Three days before Elvis Presley died God awakened me in the night and I wrote him a letter. He didn't get it. He died in the bathroom of his mansion reading a book on

discovering the skeletal remains of Jesus. Hmmn! I'm sorry! Mr. Presley knows now you'll never find the skeletal remains of Jesus. He's alive!

Elvis Presley had been exposed to religion all of his life -- all of his life. Somehow I can't help but feel -- and God knows how I loved him. I wanted the Lord Jesus to so fill his life and take that dynamic ability to communicate and use it for God's glory. I wanted that. Somehow I can't help but wonder if perhaps some of the people he met in his childhood, some of his relatives who had been exposed to religion, had never repented and therefore, Elvis was always confused and Elvis was always searching, searching, searching.

He told a friend of mine, "I sit in the mansion and I stare at these walls. I'm so bored!" -- With Cadillacs in the garage and motorcycles -- and luxury! "I stare at the walls -- I'm so bored." Life was empty but he had been touched by religion and somehow he kept searching and searching. But I wonder, had he ever met anyone who had repented? I don't believe he would have ever forgotten it, if he could only have met someone in whose Jesus was more than a religious idea! -- A living savior -- a Lord of lords and King of kings.

I was so repulsed by religion when I was a boy that I detested it. I had tried it and I knew it didn't work. I had been christened, I had been through the motions, and I knew it didn't work.

I had once taken the Bible in my hand and I clenched it and I threw it out the window and I said, "It is not so! How could the Bible be so and my life so messed up? -- My family and my homes were messed up. I'd met many people who were religious but had never repented.

What is repentance? All through the Bible you find the command to repent. God preached it to his nation Israel. He warned them they had to repent. We have to repent.

Talked to a young man the other night; told me of all the sins in his life. My first impulse was to tell him, "What you need to do is quit this and quit this and quit this." And so finally I said, "Well, you need to stop that."

You know what he said? He said, "I can't. I'm hooked. I can't stop. How do you stop?"

Do you know what I was doing? Unbeknown to me, I was giving that young man bad advice. I was saying, "You need to stop. You need to stop." You know what he needed to do? He needed to turn -- and he needed to turn his eyes upon Jesus.

Folks, I'm going to give you the definition of repentance according to scripture. Repentance is turning to Jesus Christ.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: I hope you're not distracted by that black hair.

Betty: What a handsome guy!

James: -- And that young person.

I hope and I pray that you heard the message. We will continue it tomorrow to the conclusion. Repentance was illustrated in the life of the prodigal son. He didn't just stay in that pig pen and say, "I wish I had never left home. I'm sorry I'm in the pig pen, I'm sorry I'm in trouble." He got out of the pen and he went back to the father. And the father was waiting for him with loving, open arms to literally -- now think about this -- not to shame him, not to put him down, not to accuse him but to forgive him.

It's not religion, it is not reform, it is not remorse, it is not regret. It is a return with your heart to the father and yield his life to you. Father, I pray for every person watching who has never turned to Jesus from their ways, their mistakes, their weaknesses, their failure, their bondage, and turn to you -- that they would today; in Jesus' name.

If you want someone to pray with you because you say, "I want to turn to Jesus today and give him my life," call them. Agree in prayer with them. You want to share a broken heart? That line is there for you. But I also want to remind you that we're called by God to express his heart and to extend his hands of love; to literally seek to put God's loving arms around a broken world. We have found that acts of compassion have transforming impact.

We want to ask you to look and listen to a woman, who as a girl, turned to Jesus when I was preaching. Her name is Jeanne Rogers. She's been with me more than 40 years. She's been in the mission field many, many times for 20 years. I want you to listen to Jeanne who was transformed by the power of repentance and redemption. But I want you to listen to her heart as we ask you to put God's arms around a loving world and give a cup of water in Jesus' name. I think you'll want to do it. Listen and watch.

On the mission field:

Jeanne: I've been going on mission trips for many years now. It's been such a blessing in my life. Recently though, I just returned from Madagascar and honestly, I have to say it was the most devastating thing I've ever experienced. These villages have this horrible contaminated water and it works all in and around their villages; it surrounds them.

And you know what? It is smothering the life out of them. It is water that brings death, and I am so brokenhearted over what I saw; what I saw happening to the children. Family after family that has lost little children, and they're so upset because they have no way to change anything. It's in their water, and water is necessary for life, and they have such adversity, such a hard, hard life, mainly because of the water.

There are so many things that would just mushroom and grow out of having a well right there that that's just the beginning. I want us to begin with the most basic thing, giving them clean water. That's the best place to start right now. Let's do it together.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: As I listen to Jeanne, a mother and a grandmother, and someone who came to Christ as I was preaching and we've worked together to win people to Christ, as I listen to her and know her heart, I think about the mothers that she is referencing and appealing in many ways in behalf of, Betty and I can't help but think about how precious our youngest daughter will always be to us. And how when we watched her fight the battle, until in her final moments she ultimately went to be with the Lord, I know what it would have meant to us if someone could have walked in and said, "We can change everything." Because we love our family.

Listen to me. Those mothers and those parents feel the same way about their children, and many of them don't get to enjoy their child until they're 25 or 30 or 40. They lose them but at five or six or even younger.

But the difference in their battle is that we have the absolute perfect solution. And yes, of course it is love but it is an expression of love. It is one thing to talk about love; it is another thing to give them clean water.

Betty, we can give those mothers what their heart desires, and those children what they need.

Betty: We absolutely can! All these years, when we've appealed to you about the heartache of a mother losing a child, I would weep. I would try my best to sense the hurt and feel the hurt that they felt.

I know firsthand now. It hurts when you see your child laying there and you have nothing that you can do for them. It's different in this situation though. They have a hope that is through the water wells and through helping these precious children simply by giving them fresh, pure, clean water. We can do that with your help.

James: We ask you to do just what Betty said, be the answer to their prayer, the solution to their hurt, heartache, and their potential loss by being part of a miracle. We have targeted 500 areas in more than 12 countries where we want to drill wells. It will

touch hundreds and hundreds and transform thousands of lives and give them a chance all because of love.

Would you right now reach out, dial the number, or go online LifeToday.org or get up and go and get a check and make it to *LIFE*; put it in an envelope addressed to *LIFE* or call the number.

Regardless what of you do, if you mail it, or you want to put it on a bankcard, call us now and say, "Here's my gift." The wells cost \$4800. No greater impact than giving people water -- a cup of water, a well of water in Jesus' name.

Can you give a well? Could you give part of a well? \$1200 and pray three join you. Listen to me. \$144 gives 30 people water the rest of their life. \$48 -- and don't think that's small because it gives ten people a chance at life; it will give them water. Would you please dial the number, go online and make the best gift you can to give the greatest gift, life?

We have some beautiful gifts to give you to bless you in your spiritual journey and to encourage you. Thank you so much for making that call. Thank you for making the gift of love and sharing Water for Life.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Every day millions of children are forced to make a dreadful choice, drink filthy polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is there is a solution! Mission: Water for Life is one of the most exciting and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything!

With your gift today, we can establish and drill 500 new water wells for remote villages in over 12 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten people. \$72 will impact 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh clean disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift be sure to request Beth Moore's "*Blessed Mornings & Restful Nights*," a beautiful new daily devotional to begin and end your day in God's presence.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request *Morning and Evening: I will Praise You*, a two CD collection of 20 instrumental hymns and the companion book that shares the stories behind each hymn.

Also, please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well! And be sure to request the limited edition 50th anniversary bronze sculpture, *Living Water* by artist Robert Summers.

Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today!

In the studio:

James: Well, Betty and I just say thank you so much for relieving someone's pain and giving them a hope and a future. That's what God wants, and we become the fulfillment of the desire of God's heart, and the prayers of others.

We will be sending you Beth Moore's *Blessed Mornings & Restful Nights*; the incredible hymns and how they were inspired, as well as the CD, the musical, to just bless you beyond words. The bronze is a beautiful, beautiful gift, and it is an anniversary bronze, it is the 50th anniversary.

Now remember, 18th through 20th of July; mark it down and plan to come. Let us know you're coming because we're going to be looking in the presence of God, celebrate this 50 years of ministry and marriage with us, if you will.

And remember, on Thursday we will be talking about Robin. If you want to see what Randy wrote and sang to her before she went to sleep in a poem that his son, his teenage son wrote. What a family because of God's grace and power. We want to bless you and you'll want to pass it on. It is online or we can send it to you if you request it. Thanks so much for watching.