Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Lord's Positive Prodding
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by John MacArthur

The constant war between our new nature in Christ and our old, sinful flesh is a recipe for spiritual inconsistency. Regardless of how long you've been saved or how much you've grown spiritually in that time, temptation to sin is always waiting around the corner (1 Peter 5:8).

And because we too often fall back into our old, sinful patterns, the Lord uses a variety of means to prod us back to repentance and a right relationship with Him—some are positive, others are negative. For today, let's consider some of the key methods God uses to positively prod us to repent.

First, He uses our knowledge. God has given His Word so that His people might repent. Through the Bible, He tells us that we ought to turn from a self-righteous attitude toward total faith in God through Jesus Christ plus *nothing else*. Scripture contains everything we need for salvation and sanctification (2 Timothy 3:16-17), including practical wisdom for identifying and destroying sin in our lives. We can't act on God's Word unless we know it first.

Access to and an understanding of Scripture is essential for true repentance. Apart from His Word, we can't know the truth about our sin, our need for a Savior, Christ's perfect sacrifice on our behalf, the means of salvation, or God's pattern for sanctification. Cut yourself off from the truth of God's Word and you've cut yourself off from any hope of repentance, redemption, or spiritual growth.

The Lord's second means for prodding believers to repentance is His goodness. As Jesus said, "He . . . sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). God showers His goodness on people through the joys of life, such as love and the beauty of nature. In Romans 2, the apostle Paul says that the Israelites had every blessing and promise of God, and yet they treaded on His goodness. He says, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repen-tance?" (Romans 2:4). God's goodness is for the purpose of bringing us to turn around and change our minds about Him and about Jesus.

Third, God uses our sorrow for sin as a means to prod us back to repentance. Have you ever done something wrong and then felt bad? That's a good thing, because guilt is God's way of enabling us to feel the evil of our own sin.

In our previous blog series, we discussed the gift of the conscience. As the soul's internal warning system, the conscience can cause depression and anguish over your sin. But it's a precious gift that God has given each person to guard him from the dangers of sin, and to steer him back to His perfect, righteous standard.

Therefore, how you respond to your conscience is *vitally* important. There are a lot of people who are sorry about their sins but who are not saved because they do not turn from sin. Others believe but they can't get past their guilt feelings, and their perpetually wounded consciences inhibit their spiritual growth. It is critical that our sorrow over sin prompts us to repen-tance and change (2 Corinthians 7:9). Otherwise it's worthless.

Tomorrow we'll look at the negative ways the Lord prods us to repent.

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