

You've Got to Change – Your Mind and Your Behavior

Fire and Brimstone

- **Vs. 7-8a, 9.** Know what this is: F/B preaching! When you call someone brood vipers, not mincing words; and when preach re coming wrath, being thrown into fire, you mean business. This is F/B preaching! If JB here today, slamming fist down on pulpit, pointing finger, yelling at top of lungs. Ever remem hearing pastor preach like that before? If I preached sermon like that, you'd probably think: PKL, wrong side bed today, here to yell at us. But this is how JB preaches every Adv season: with F/B. Every year stands by Jordan R, says: you've got to repent! And maybe we're used to it; and maybe it's lost shock factor. But we dare never ignore this F/B message. Repent, you people Judea, Burlington. You've got to repent. Or maybe could say this way: you've got to change!
- Bec, you see: word repent really means to change, your mind. Usually we think of word repent meaning to apologize to God, tell him we're sorry for our sins; cert true. But literally Gk word for repent means change mind, esp re sin. So when John says you've got repent, really saying you've got change mind, thinking, attitude re your sin. And when you change mind, you'll also change behavior. So today, with powerful F/B message, JB says: you've got to change!

You've Got to Change Your Mind

- And 1st thing that has happen if going repent/change mind re sin: you 1st have admit you do sin. You have see in own life those areas where you guilty of breaking God's commands, disobeying his will. We all have personal, pet sins struggle with. And 1st thing have do: see/admit what those sins are.
- But what comes next very imp! How do you deal with your sin? What do with it once you recognize it in your own life? I'll tell you: lot of bad ways we tend to deal with our sin. Can think 3 right now:
 - 1st, we minimize. "No big deal; trivial, compared to what others do. Come on: I'm not murderer, felon." And sure, maybe never killed anyone. But your sins still make you personally guilty before God; and you cannot minimize that by comparing yourself to others.
 - Another thing we do: justify, excuse sin. "Yeah, I know this is wrong. BUT, this is what I've got to do; want to do; that's just how it is." That's excusing, justifying sin – rationalizing some reason why you think it's okay.
 - 3rd, sometimes when sin, try make up for it. "Made God mad by doing this; so make up for it, make him happy again, by doing this." But one of central truths of Xianity: your good works cannot earn God's grace – certainly not by counterbalancing them with evil.
- So these just 3 examples of wrong ways we deal with sin. There may be more. But what all have in common: simply skirt the issue, don't deal with real problem. John talked re this: **vs. 8b.** Jews often dealt with their sin: we're children Abraham, God's people. But again: just skirting issue. And we do same thing whenever we minimize sin, or try to excuse or make up for it.
- Problem is: never leads to true repentance! JB's main message, his F/B message: you've got repent! But you can never truly repent unless change mind re sin. You can't skirt issue, dismiss sin away. Instead, you've got to own it; look at what done/do, say this is mine; I'm guilty of this; I own this.
- Bec only when you truly change mind re sin in this way. take ownership of it: only then can you bring it before Lord, lay it all before him (not trying dismiss anything), just give to him and say, "Lord, I repent; please forgive me." And when you do that, then you will find the full/free, no strings attached, unconditional forgiveness of your loving heavenly Father. Then your guilt will be lifted from your shoulders, placed on shoulders of Jesus; and he will own your sin. Then, when you hear JB say "Ax already at root trees," it'll remind you that instead of chopping down your tree, God nailed his Son to a tree. Instead of punishing you, God punished Jesus, who took your place, took away your guilt by his death on cross, so that all your sins would be forgiven forever. Today John, with F/B, says, "You've got repent." not bec mad. but because he knows: when you truly change mind re sin and trust in Jesus as Savior, then that precious blessing of Lord's unconditional forgiveness is yours.

You've Got to Change Your Behavior

- Which brings about another change. First you've got change mind. But then got change behavior. John says, **vs. 8a, 9b**. Here, good fruit is a picture of good behavior. And as I already said, good behavior is not going make up for sin or get you into heaven. But: just like good fruit comes from a good tree, so also good behavior comes from a forgiven Xian. Again.
- There was group forgiven Xians came up to JB, asked **vs. 10a**. John: got change! Now that you've changed mind, now behavior! **Vs. 11**. That's change of behavior, from stingy selfishness to (phrase from few weeks ago) joyful generosity. Forgiven Xians share, generous: with money, time, skills, clothing, food. I challenge you, as forgiven Xian, to change your behavior, be more joyful, generous.
- **Vs. 12-13**. That's change of behavior, from deceitful dishonesty to honest integrity. Tax collectors known for cheating people. Forgiven Xians don't cheat: employer/ees, in business or taxes; they're honest with finances; have integrity in dealings with everyone. I challenge you, as forgiven Xian, to change your behavior, conduct yourself with honest integrity in everything you do.
- **Vs. 14...falsely**. That's change of behavior from having loose lips to having tight rein on tongue. Means keeping *8th Com and Expl*. Forgiven Xians don't slander or spread gossip. I challenge you, as forgiven Xian, to change your behavior so no longer gossip or say hurtful things about others. And, as John concludes, **vs. 14c** – which, I think, speaks for itself.

You've Got to Change!

- This what JB says, with F/B: you've got to change: mind & behavior. And I'm not trying to be a pulpit pounding F/B preacher at you. I'm including myself, as well. I know very well my own personal sins that I need to repent of; and I know where my behavior has to improve. I've got to change; and so do you! That's the point! We all have to change, bec '**one more powerful than JB (vs. 16)...with HS and fire**' (ref to J-Day). **Vs. 17**. Jesus is coming – and don't mean in 9 days at Xmas; I mean at end of world. And we have be ready! And that's why today JB is so F/B (brood vipers, coming wrath, ax at root trees). Wants us repent, bec that's how you get ready for Jesus come!
- So, it's time to change. You've got change mind & behavior. Then you'll be ready.

Luke 3:7-18

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰ "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. ¹¹ John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same." ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" ¹³ "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. ¹⁴ Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

¹⁵ The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." ¹⁸ And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.