

Together: Repentance offers sin's only remedy_20904

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TOGETHER: Repentance offers sin's only remedy

Worshipping the past few weeks in an African-American church in Missouri City, a Hispanic church in north Houston and an Anglo church in Seagoville, I have experienced both the joy and the seriousness of worship. God is good all the time. I cherish what I see him doing in the lives of Texas Baptists.

When we worship, we offer ourselves heart and soul to God. Everything in us is touched when we enter fully into his presence.

One often-neglected part of worship is the call to confess our sin before God that we might be forgiven and renewed.

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Isaiah has given us an example of confession in the midst of worship. "Woe

to me! I cried I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5).

Like Isaiah, we must recognize our predicament and our sin—a view of ourselves we avoid as much as possible. We can look in the mirror of our own egos, and by rearranging certain patterns, we make ourselves appear amazingly attractive. Depending on our motivation, looking in mirrors can be a helpful reality check or it can be an excuse for constructing a façade.

Some of us who attend worship regularly want to go away feeling all is well in the earth. We want a God who is all-forgiving and will control things the way we want them controlled. We want to believe it doesn't matter who we are or what we do, as long as we express our love for God. We'd prefer a God who won't ask us to be responsible for our thoughts and behavior. We'd prefer a God who doesn't require us to look within for the sin that needs rooting out.

But if we do not turn our eyes inward to search the paths of our walk, we miss the cleansing and renewing that worship can bring to our lives.

In true worship, it can feel as though the heavens open and God appears.

We see our emptiness. We come face to face with our prejudice, guilt, pride, unloving spirit, critical attitude, jealous ways, greediness, laziness, lack of concern for hurting people and indulgence in destructive diversions of the flesh. We confront our carelessness for being poor stewards of the life God has given us. Unless we are willing to admit our sin, we journey through life in denial and arrogance.

Experiencing the holiness of God through worship illuminates our sin and unworthiness and awakens us to the glory reflected in a holy God. Facing the truth of our condition frees us to respond in humility to God's call to be his servants.

We don't get rid of sin and guilt by ignoring our wounds, pretending we aren't bitter and unforgiving, or rationalizing our wrongdoing by saying we aren't as bad as some people.

When our hearts condemn us and guilt lives in our souls, there is only one remedy for the sickness. Seeing the love and mercy of God, we must turn repentantly from our sin and sorrow, trusting him for forgiveness.

Healing and renewal come only through the forgiveness of Jesus Christ who loves us while we are sinners, just like we are.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

We are loved.

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