

Coach House Church BEACONS

THE NEED FOR AN APOLOGY

25TH FEBRUARY 2021

Have you ever convinced yourself that you have done something, only to realise that you did something similar, not necessarily the thing in question, and then been caught out because the thing you thought you had done was now required, whilst the thing that you had done, which you thought was the thing that was required, was not required at all, at the time you thought it was? Confused? Well so was I, and I suspect I'm not the only one!

It's Andy here with today's beacon.

I suppose the ramble at the beginning is because... Well, here is my confession (and/or excuse if you like?) ... I completely forgot about getting this in on time, because, and I know that this is not good reason, I had done my preaching notes early and deposited them in the same way as I would a beacon transcript – and then convinced myself that the beacon was therefore done! All well and good until a timely reminder pops up from the beacon management team, that I'm late with my submission. OOPS! Then all becomes clear.

So, how do I put this right?

Well, firstly I apologise to the 'management' for letting them down.

Secondly, I do what is required before the situation gets worse (and you are reading/listening to it so, here it is!) Thirdly, I recognise my failure and put steps in place to make sure it doesn't happen again.

I suppose that this is a familiar exercise for a lot of us. As you listen or read these qualifications, I'm sure that they will strike a chord, either within yourself or from other examples you will have come across.

Let me recall a scripture that has come to me. In fact, it is one of my foundational quotations when it comes to my worship of God.

It is from the prophet Isaiah, who was sent to speak God's words to the nation of Judah.

Isaiah 58:1-9 (NLT)

“Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Shout aloud! Don’t be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me. ‘We have fasted before you!’ they say. ‘Why aren’t you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don’t even notice it!’ “I will tell you why!” I respond. “It’s because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarrelling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD? “No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. “Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. Then when you call, the LORD will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply.

It was a time of great turmoil for God's chosen people. The Kingdom had been divided and Israel in the North had decided to take its chances with Kings who did not follow God faithfully. This resulted in them being conquered by the nation of Assyria. The Southern half of the kingdom was known as Judah and unlike Israel, it had a number of Kings who tried to remain faithful to God.

As a result, they survived as a nation for longer, before finally falling to the Kingdom of Babylon in 586BC.

During this time, God sent messengers to warn the kings of the consequences of their disobedience and unfaithfulness. If you do what is right you will be blessed, but if you continue to do wrong you will be punished.

This all sounds quite draconian doesn't it? However, we see this played out in our lives on an almost daily basis. Do the right things and we are generally happy and satisfied. Do the wrong things and we suffer, maybe not physically sometimes, but certainly in our spirit, our conscience and mental wellbeing.

There are always consequences to our actions.

In this passage the people of Judah think that they have been doing the right things, but in reality, they had just been playing lip service it had become a meaningless ritual,

Now, some would have genuinely been giving honour to God with hearts that were truly wanting to worship him, but the focus of this passage is on those that are in a position to lead others in this worship – the Kings or priests that had been given the instructions directly from the Prophets.

Now, before you shout that this isn't fair, why should the nation be punished because the kings and priests were disobedient, we have to realise that their actions would have consequences for the nation, because the nations had allowed them to have dominion over them. It had been their choice in the first place.

The prophet Isaiah told them in no uncertain terms that what they were doing was not what God required. Their actions were going to cause separation and the prophet Isaiah was warning them about this. Years later God would prove his faithfulness to the people by bringing them out of captivity. He never abandons and always gives a way out – and will continue to do so until there is no time left!

Peter writes to believers in his 2nd letter, that God is patient with us – not wanting any to perish without him.

2 Peter 3 v 9

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

Think about that for a second patient with those that already belong to Him and patient with those who do not. But one thing is certain – a day is coming when all things come to an end and there will be no other chances.

You would think that people would learn their lessonhowever, history tells a different story.

We sing a song today about coming back to the heart of worship. It's in my mind now because we sang it on Sunday. Singing the song doesn't achieve anything by itself. It is worthless, just as the fasting and other things the people of Judah were doing, were also worthless. God looks at our hearts and sees what motivates our songs or actions.

A song, or fasting is not what God requires, if the heart behind it is flawed.

I must put a caveat in here, because our singing today is restricted by the Covid regulations. So, now, more than ever, our worship comes from the heart and we concentrate on the words perhaps with greater focus. All this serves to fix our eyes on Jesus, who rescues us from the certainty of separation from God. God provided the sacrifice of Jesus to satisfy His requirements, because as we have plainly seen, we cannot do it ourselves.

I am so thankful that Jesus, understands my failure and hurts, that He undertakes to pay the price for my past, present and future and that in Him, I am a clothed with righteousness that I do not deserve.

And how have I achieved this:

I said sorry to the management – I recognised my wrongs and asked God to forgive me.

Secondly, I did what was required to make the situation correct before things got worse – I asked Jesus to take over my life and run things from now on.

Thirdly, I submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who now lives in me as the guarantee of Gods promises, and allow Him to teach me, lead me and make me more like Jesus day by day.

On the days I struggle, I work harder to remind myself, that I NEED TO STOP STRIVING IN THE WRONG THINGS AND SIMPLY THANK JESUS FOR ALL HE HAS DONE AND IS DOING.

*When the music fades
And all is stripped away
And I simply come
Longing just to bring
Something that's of worth
That will bless Your heart
I'll bring You more than a song
For a song in itself
Is not what You have required
You search much deeper within
Through the way things appear
You're looking into my heart

I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And it's all about You
It's all about You, Jesus
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
When it's all about You

It's all about You, Jesus*

Matt Redman

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