

Changing the Way We Think



Agreeing With God (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing on this week's inspiring—but also challenging theme—Agreeing with God.

In my previous talks I've explained that God invites us to walk with him, but that a necessary condition for this is that we agree with God. This is stated clearly and briefly in Amos 3, verse 3, in a form of a question. "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" The implication clearly is, no. In order to walk together two people have to agree.

What does that mean to agree? I suggest that it means that we have to harmonize in our ways and our thoughts. So in order to walk with God, we have to harmonize in our ways and thoughts with God. But by nature, the Scripture points out, especially in Isaiah, chapter 55, that our ways and our thoughts are not in harmony with those of God. In fact, God says, "My ways and my thoughts are not yours, and as the heavens are high above the earth, so are my ways and my thoughts above your thoughts." In other words, the gap between God's ways and thoughts and ours is as great as the gap between heaven and earth, which is measureless. Since God does not change, the only option left to us is to change our ways and thoughts if we want to harmonize with God, agree with God, and thus be able to accept God's invitation to walk in fellowship with Him.

Now, I pointed out yesterday, and I want to reaffirm it today, out of His grace, God has made provision for us to do this—to change our ways and thoughts. Let me quote briefly from Isaiah, chapter 55, verses 10 and following:

> "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, [There's the basic solution.] As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and produce both bread and seed, [God says] So is my Word that goes out from my mouth. [The answer is the solution is in God's Word. And then He goes on to say:] it will not return to Him empty. It will accomplish what He desires, achieve the purpose for which He sent it, [and then He outlines what it will accomplish and the

> purpose for which He sent it.] You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed." (NIV)

So, we notice there are different operations of rain and snow but they both ultimately make the earth fruitful, ultimately they bring forth bread to eat and seed to sow, and the ongoing results of receiving God's Word are joy, peace, praise, and fruitfulness. The pine and the myrtle replace the thorns and the briers. The thorns and the briers are the product of our ways and our thoughts. The pine and the myrtle are the products of God's thoughts. And finally, this is for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign. It will bring God glory which will never again be solid or tarnished.

Now today I'm going to explain more fully what's involved in this process of changing the way we think. It's of the utmost importance.

The Bible has a special word for this: "repentance." Repentance means literally "to change your mind," that is "to change the way you think." And all through the New Testament this is stated as the primary requirement for reconciliation with God. There is no way for man, with all his different ways and thoughts to be reconciled with God unless he changes the way he thinks; that is, unless he repents.

Let's just take a few quick examples from the New Testament. In Mark, chapter 1, verses 2 through 4, Mark gives the introduction to the gospel ministry of Jesus.

> "It is written in Isaiah the prophet: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way'—'a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him." And so John [That's John the Baptist] came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." (NIV)

The key word in John's ministry was "repentance," and that was needed to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah Jesus. Until God's people had been confronted with a need to change their way of thinking, they were not ready to receive the Messiah.

And then a little further on in Mark 1, verses 14 and 15, Mark describes the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus.

> "After John [the Baptist] was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. [That's the Gospel.] 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (NIV)

Notice the first commandment Jesus gave in His public ministry was "Repent, change the way you think," and only after that can people believe. It's a great error to imagine that we can believe in a true sense of the word "believe" until we have repented. It's always repent first, then believe.

After his resurrection, Jesus told His disciples in Luke 24:47, repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His Name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. Notice the message is, repentance first and then forgiveness of sins. There can be no forgiveness of sins without repentance, that is without our changing our minds and the way that we think. And then on the Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, in verse 38, when the convicted but unconverted multitude said to the apostles, "Men and brethren, what must we do? Jesus gave them a very clear answer.

> "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.'" (NIV)

What was the first thing that he had to do when he was the spokesman both of God and of the church? The first requirement is, repent—change the way you think.

And then Paul, speaking to the men of Athens, a very different kind of crowd—intellectuals, Gentiles, not people with a Jewish background—in Acts 17, verse 30, Paul tells these men:

> "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but he now commands all people everywhere to repent." (NIV)

That leaves out no person and no place. All people everywhere have to repent, change their way of thinking. Now why is that? The reason is given in Isaiah. One simple verse in Isaiah gives the reason. Isaiah 53:6:

> "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." (NIV)

That's true of everyone of us. So how do we get back into fellowship with God? By repenting, by changing our way and our thinking.

In connection with this process that I'm speaking about, I want to introduce you to another important Biblical word which is the word, "meditation." I want to suggest to you that meditation actually means, in the Bible, learning to think God's way, and meditation opens the door to God's favor and blessing.

In Joshua 1, verse 8, God told this to Joshua:

> "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (NIV)

The Word of God had to fill Joshua's mind. He had to think in terms of God's Word all the time. Then he had to speak it out with his mouth and he had to follow it up with corresponding action, but it started in his mind. The key was right meditation. The promise for right meditation is, "then you will be prosperous and successful." That's the pine and the myrtle coming up in place of the thorn and the brier.

And then in the first Psalm there's this beautiful opening passage which really sets the key note for the whole of Psalms. Psalm 1, verses 1 through 3:

> "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." (NIV)

Notice, there are three things that such a man must not do. He must not walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. In other words, he must renounce man's ways and thoughts, and he must in turn replace those with God's ways and thoughts which come to him through the law of the Lord and he has to meditate on it day and night. He has to fill his mind with God's thoughts and God's ways. And when he does that, then this beautiful promise is given. It's similar to the promise that we've already looked at in Isaiah 55. Such a man is like a tree planted by streams of water, yields his fruit in season, his leaf does not wither. He's always blessed. He's always flourishing. He's always fresh. He doesn't know withering. He doesn't know barrenness. Such things are not his portion and it's all summed up in that simple, beautiful phrase, "Whatever he does prospers." Would you like to be like that? God has shown us the key. It's to let His Word come into our hearts and minds and meditate on it day and night. Replace our ways and thoughts with His thoughts and the result is, whatever we do will prosper.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about specific areas of our thinking that we need to change.

Radio Program

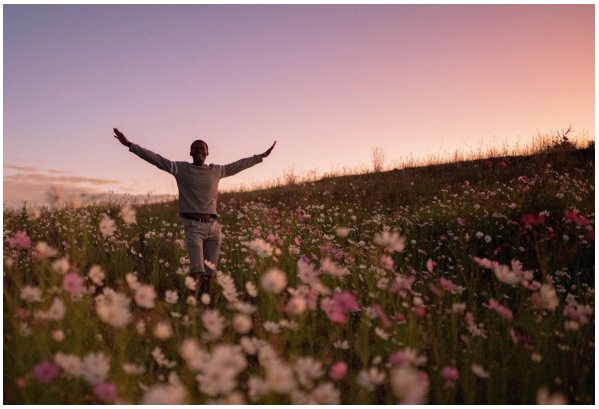
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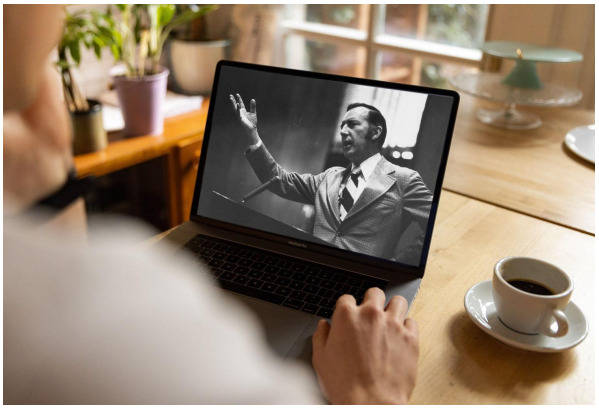
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