

## **Lessons on Repentance from Five Leaders**

By Brian Chirnside

The recent events in Japan gave me cause to reflect on lessons on repentance from five leaders.

1. President Richard Nixon was the first US President to be impeached in 1973 for systematically lying to the American Congress over the Watergate scandal. As he gave his farewell speech at the Whitehouse he infamously declared “I am NOT a crook”. The reaction the American public was that they hated him and historians have ranked him the worst American President of all time.

2. Governor Bill Clinton was campaigning for the Presidency in 1991 and when asked about his use of marijuana during his years at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar confessed that “I smoked but I did not inhale” - the American public laughed at him but elected him President anyway.

3. Mr Masataka Shimizu, CEO of the Tokyo Electric Power Company, expressed regret for “causing such trouble.” Whilst 250 of his employees work around the clock in the Fukushima nuclear power plant, he chose not to visit them nor even show his face in public. Possibly he was too ashamed or too fearful of the public anger that he would have to endure.

4. Judas Iscariot – in exchange for 30 pieces of silver - agreed to betray Jesus to his enemies with a kiss on the cheek. He then had a massive attack of guilt and regret and went out and hung himself.

What do all these four examples of failed leadership have to show us? I think there are three key learning points:

- a) When you get caught don't deny it – it just makes people lose all respect for you.
- b) Don't hide from your sin – it just makes you look even smaller than you already are.
- c) When you feel sorry for what you did don't harm yourself. God does not want that to happen.

Why do we humans find it so difficult when confronted with our sins? Why is it that like President Nixon we deny it, like Governor Clinton we minimize it, like Mr Shimizu we hide from it and like Judas Iscariot we are so ashamed that we harm ourselves?

The Bible tells us why we too are like these four leaders. In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve took the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and they ate it. God had warned them that they would die if they were to do so but they were deceived by the Devil and they ate it anyway. When God came looking for them in the garden they were afraid and hid from him. They had no defence against

God but Adam nonetheless blamed **Eve** for giving him the fruit and then he blamed **God** for giving him Eve in the first place! God punished him by evicting him from the garden of Eden. In other words, Adam behaved just like Nixon, just like Clinton, just like Shimizu. He denied his sin, he minimized it, he sought to hide and he was filled with regret because of what he had done. Adam's example shows us a picture of regret but we need to study a 5<sup>th</sup> leader in order to see true Biblical example of remorse and repentance.

The 5<sup>th</sup> and final example of leadership is seen in the life of King David. Despite being given the position of King of Israel, several wives, great wealth and a palace, David was not content. He committed adultery with Bathsheeba the wife of Uriah. She got pregnant so David arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle. When God confronted David of his sin the servant King of Israel was immediately cut to the heart and confessed his sin. When the baby was born he became ill so David prayed and fasted for eight days asking God to spare the life of the baby. Sadly the baby died but the Bible tells us that David immediately rose to his feet, declared that God was good and he re-dedicated his life to serving God as King of Israel. He also wrote a beautiful psalm which teaches us about repentance and forgiveness - Psalm 51.

***“Have mercy upon me O God, according to your loving kindness; according to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions...For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in your sight...Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within Me...Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness...The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – these, O God, You will not despise.***

The devil knows our weaknesses and he will ruthlessly target us for temptation and seek to bring us down. The good news is that our failure is **NOT** the end. What matters is how we handle our failure. David provides a pattern of confession, prayer, fasting and contrition. He also shows us that it is our calling to show comfort to our brothers and sisters who have fallen into sin. It is never easy for sinners to face up to their sin but it is part and parcel of redemption and rehabilitation. Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection, has defeated the Devil and has secured the way back to God for those who believe and trust in Him. In an unforgiving and judgmental world that delights in gossip and condemnation, God gave us Jesus. He gave us the cross. He gave us a way to be good again and start afresh. What a wonderful Savior is Jesus our Lord.

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