

Jeremiah 31:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

Analysis

Ephraim continues his confession, describing the progression of repentance. 'After that I was turned, I repented'—the turning (conversion) precedes repentance. This reflects the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation): regeneration precedes repentance and faith. God must first give spiritual life before the dead sinner can respond. Then comes instruction—understanding the nature and severity of their sin. This leads to deep remorse: 'I smote upon my thigh'—a gesture of grief and shame. They bear 'the reproach of my youth'—acknowledging lifelong sin from their earliest days.

The phrase 'I did bear the reproach of my youth' shows that Israel's sin was not recent innovation but long-standing rebellion. From their youth as a nation (the wilderness generation), they had been unfaithful. This honest assessment—recognizing deep, systemic, lifelong sin—is necessary for genuine repentance. Superficial religion addresses symptoms; genuine repentance acknowledges root corruption and total dependence on God's grace.

This pattern appears throughout Scripture. Conviction of sin (through the Holy Spirit's work) leads to repentance, which produces godly sorrow, which results in changed behavior (2 Corinthians 7:10). The order matters: God must first work in us (turn us) before we can work out our salvation (Philippians 2:12-13). This protects the doctrine of grace—salvation is God's work, though it engages our whole person in response.

Historical Context

The exile forced Israel to confront what they had denied during prosperity—that their sin was serious and God's judgment just. Stripped of temple, land, and political power, they had to face reality: they were rebels who deserved punishment, not victims of injustice. This painful self-awareness was necessary for restoration. Similarly, the Holy Spirit convicts sinners of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8) before they can genuinely come to Christ.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What is the relationship between God's work of 'turning' us and our response of repenting and believing?
2. How does genuine repentance differ from mere regret or shame—what characterizes true godly sorrow over sin?
3. Why is it important to acknowledge our 'youth'—the deep, long-standing nature of our sin—rather than viewing ourselves as generally good people who made mistakes?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	וְאַחֲרֵי	שׁוּבוּ	נִמְתָּאִי	וְאַחֲרֵי	תִּדְעֵוּ
H3588	Surely after	that I was turned	I repented	Surely after	that I was instructed
H310		H7725	H5162	H310	H3045
עָלָל	עַל	יְגַנֵּב	בְּשִׁתְיִ	גַּם	כִּי
I smote	upon my thigh	I was ashamed	H1571	yea even confounded	H3588
H5606	H5921	H3409	H954	H3637	
בָּשָׁאָתִי	תְּרַנְּפָתָה	נְעֹזָרִי			
because I did bear	the reproach	of my youth	H5271		
H5375	H2781				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 3:25 (Parallel theme): We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

Ezekiel 36:31 (Parallel theme): Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

Ezekiel 21:12 (Parallel theme): Cry and howl, son of man: for it shall be upon my people, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel: terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon thy thigh.

Luke 18:13 (Parallel theme): And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Deuteronomy 30:2 (Parallel theme): And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

Psalms 25:7 (Parallel theme): Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Zechariah 12:10 (Parallel theme): And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Ezra 9:6 (Parallel theme): And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

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