

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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Repentance Toward God and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

The apostle Paul said that despite persecution he did not shrink back from teaching both Jew and Gentile what was profitable, that is, repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – Acts 20:19-21. Well Paul has long been with the Lord, but since God's Word is forever settled in heaven, it is still teaching us today this same profitable message – Ps 119:89; 2 Tim 3:16-17. We have a deep, deep, deep problem. This problem is not only what we have done in sinning against a holy God. It is who we are, down to the very core of our being. From conception our very nature is sinful, hates God, is hostile toward God, and cannot ever please God – Eph 2:1-3; Rom 8:6-8; Ps 51:4-5. Psalm 58:3 says we that come out of the womb speaking lies! Jeremiah 17:9 says that our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. God, Who is holy, holy, holy, hates sin and cannot fellowship with us as long as this is who we are. He eventually even must judge us into an eternal lake of fire if there is no change - Is 6:3; Rom 3:23; Lk 13:5; Rev 20:11-15. In the word "fellowship" is the idea of joyfully walking alongside one another in agreement. It is having the same mind. Therefore, if God is thinking and acting one way and we are thinking and acting entirely another way, there can obviously be no fellowship. It is certainly not that God does not desire to fellowship with us. He created us in His image so we could have this fellowship with Him. He dwelt in the tabernacle and in the temple with Israel and now He desires to tabernacle

We have a deep, deep problem. It is not just what we have done but it is who we are by nature – Jer 17:9; Eph 2:1-3.

with us by dwelling in us. He even humbled Himself to take on human flesh to die for us, taking on Himself the penalty we deserve, to make this fellowship possible – Rom 5:6-11; Phil 2:5-8; Jn 1:1, 14, 29; Is 57:15; Jn 14:16-23; 2 Cor 5:11 – 6:2 with Is 49:7-9a; Col 1:20-22. Yet, this fellowship is impossible because of who we are. The problem is me. I am the sinner. I must change if God and I are to fellowship. Therefore, on the basis of Christ's redemptive work, He now pleads with us to change our mind/attitude (repentance) and accept the provision He has made for us (faith in Christ) to be in relationship with Him and, therefore, fellowship with Him. This explains why repentance is necessary and commanded in the New Testament by John the Baptist, then Jesus, Peter, and finally the apostle Paul. See Lk 24:45-47; Mt 3:1-2; 4:17; Acts 2:38-39; 3:19-21; 17:30-31; 20:21; 26:16-20; 2Pet 3:9. This consistent and steady pace of God's call to repentance combined with the fact that God cannot lie and our need has not changed gives us clear direction for today, that men everywhere, including you and I, must repent or perish – Lk 13:1-5; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18.

The noun form of the Greek word for repentance is *Metanoia* and it means "afterthought, change of mind." The verb form is *Metanoeo*, which means "to perceive afterwards, to have another mind." It carries the idea of hearing a view of things which is different than our own view and then having a

change of mind about the matter toward the other point of view. As Jesus went about His earthly ministry, He was constantly trying to get men to see themselves and judge themselves rightly for who they really were—sinners in need of Him to deliver them from sin. He did this so that they would come humbly, putting their faith in Him, God's only offer of salvation – Jn 6:45; Lk 18:9-17; Mt 11:20-24, 28-30. God is still doing this today to you and I and all men. God's Spirit is using His Word to bring about a change of mind in us

God is holy. I am the sinner. I must change if God and I are to fellowship – Acts 26:18; 2 Peter 3:9; Luke 13:1-5.

so that we will turn from sin to God in self judgment depending only on the Person and work of Jesus Christ to save us - Rom 1:16-20; 2:4; 2 Tim 2:24-26; Jn 16:7-9, Acts 26:15-20. When we come to Him this way, we find abundant mercy and blessing in the arms of a loving God Who is satisfied with His Son's death in our place. He pardons us, removes our sin, puts the righteousness of His Son Jesus to our account, gives us a new nature and life which is that of His Son and so much more. We are at this moment by His graceful act put into an eternal and intimate relationship with Him, a relationship so intimate that Jesus can say that He is in us and we are in Him. We can now walk with Him in happy fellowship – Is 55:7; Rom 3:23-26; 5:6-11; 8:1; Ps 103:11-12; Is 43:25; Eph 1:3-7; 2 Cor 5:21; Jn 5:24 ; 2 Pet 1:4; Jn 14:20. But, if we come any other way we meet God in His wrath – Jn 3:36; Rom 2:5-6; 2 Thess 1:8-9. Do you see why it is so important that we have a change of mind and see ourselves for who we really are? It is so that we will say, "I have need, need of a Savior!" The pride of the Pharisees kept them from seeing their need and so they rejected and murdered the very One Who could meet their greatest need. As a result, their sin remained on them and they remained at enmity with God - Jn 9:39-41. See also John 8:24. The jailer saw his need and said, "What must I do to be saved?" If we never see our need, we'll never come and take refuge from God's wrath in His abundant provision in Christ. The heart of God suffers long and desires all men to repent and be saved, and the more we see ourselves for who we truly are, the more we will see the beautiful heart of God – 2 Pet 3:9; Ezek 18:32.

J. N. Darby defines repentance as, "Judging oneself and one's sin with a heart turned to God." C.H. Mackintosh's definition is, "Repentance involves the solemn judgment of ourselves, our condition, and our way, in the presence of God; and, further, that this judgment is not a transient feeling, but an abiding condition – not a certain exercise to be gone through as a sort of title to the remission of sins, but the deep and settled habit of the soul, giving seriousness, gravity, tenderness, brokenness, and profound humility which shall overlap, underlie, and characterize our entire course. True repentance is the discovery and hearty confession of our utter ruin and guilt. It is finding out that my whole life has been a lie, and that I myself am a liar." True repentance,

as this definition touches on, only takes place in the presence of God. Psalm 51:4 tells me that when I sin, no matter what it is, I am sinning exactly against God and I am doing it right before His eyes. It only makes perfect sense then that it is only in His presence that true repentance takes place. It is Him I have offended and it is Him I must take sides with against myself (the offender). Many men seem to repent in the presence of men, even with great sorrow and tears, but go right back out and sin all the more. A changed life only occurs when we repent in the presence of our holy God. Judas went to religious leaders instead of into the presence of God. If he had judged himself rightly in the presence of God and in that state put his faith in the very One he had betrayed, he would have found God to be merciful and to pardon. Sadly though, Judas only had a worldly sorrow which leads to death – Mt 27:3-5; Acts 8:22-24. Godly sorrow is a realization that I have offended the holy character of a loving God

Repentance is, "A change of mind involving both turning from sin in self-judgment and to God" - R.M. Gruber.

and it leads me to repentance without regret unto salvation. It results in me saying, "I, Lord, have sinned against you!" The prodigal son is a good example. He left his father confident in himself, full of pride, but came back with no confidence in himself, brought low, humbled, and simply desiring to be a servant - Lk 15:11-32; 2 Cor 7:10. 2 Cor 7:6-13, esp. verse 11 with 1 Cor 5 gives us a detailed look at some results of godly sorrow. John's gospel and epistles never mention repentance because the effects of and not the acts of repentance are stressed - Jn 3:3; 5:8; 9:36; 1 Jn 1:9. The goal of the gospel is to bring

about the obedience of faith. This is our submission to God's view of ourselves and His only offer of salvation, Jesus - Acts 20:21; 16:30-31; Rom 1:5; 16:25-27; 2 Thes 1:8. Essentially, repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is our first act of obedience which is followed by the fruitful walk of obedience to God in Christ as He is formed in us – Rom 15:18; 16:19; 2 Cor 10:5; Gal 4:19; Mt 3:8; Lk 3:8; Acts 26:20.

Repentance is not penitence, which is merely being sorry for sins committed. Repentance is also not penance, which is an effort to somehow balance the wrong we have done with good. This is impossible because God looks at the heart, not the outward appearance, and our heart is wicked, producing only filthy rags to God – 1 Sam 16:7; Lk 16:15; Jer 17:9; Is 64:6. Finally, repentance is not reformation, which is an attempt to replace bad habits with good ones. Scripture is clear that there is no way to repair or change our sinful nature – Jer 13:23. Our only deliverance from who we are comes when we put our faith in Christ. When we do, God's Spirit puts us in union with Him on the cross, and who we are in Adam (self) is put to death there, judged by God. In union with Christ we are also made altogether new by partaking in or sharing in His resurrection life. Thus, we are born again, a new man in Christ with the sin nature condemned by God – 1 Cor 1:30, Rom 6:3-8; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 2:13; Eph 1:3; 2:5. Being linked with Christ is our only hope of the glory that we fell short of in sin – Rom 3:23; Jn 1:14; Col 1:27.

Our initial repentance varies in depth from one person to another but our deepest level of repentance actually comes after we are born again. Even after we receive new life in Christ, our flesh, although it has been judged and condemned on the cross, is still in us while we are in this body. It is even increasing in evil and wants more and more to fulfill its lusts – 1Cor 15:42-44; Rom 7:18; Gal 5:16-17; Rom 13:14; Eph 4:22. In Noah, we see a righteous man who walked with God. Yet, we see that when he got off the ark, he got drunk, and then one of his sons defiled him – Gen 6:9, 22; 9:18-25. We are our worst enemy as long as the flesh resides in us. Therefore, if we are to live out our new life walking worthy of our calling in Christ, it is essential that we have a healthy and constant distrust of ourselves and sit in self-judgment of ourselves daily, putting off the old. When we do sin we should, in repentance, confess our sins to God as soon as God's Spirit brings them to our awareness – Eph 4:22; 1Jn1:5-10; Prov 28:13. This keeps us in happy fellowship with God and keeps our flesh from fulfilling its evil desires because it needs our cooperation to do so. In this state, God's Spirit will be leading us and be the controlling influence in a life which is pleasing to God – Rom 6:13; Gal 5:18, 25. As we put on the new (Christ), cooperating with God's Spirit instead of the flesh,

His fruit is produced in our life instead of sin. As we move to obey we find the power (God's Spirit) is within to carry it out. Sin is no longer our master. We have died to it and now we live to God under the authority of Christ – Eph 4:23-24; Rom 7:4-6; Rom 13:14; Phil 2:12-13; Rom 8:10-14; 1 Cor 9:21; 2 Cor 10:5. The clearer and more consistently we have Christ in our view, the clearer we will see our own unrighteousness and our need of His righteousness and His life. Therefore, a deeper level of repentance will be characteristic as we grow in the Christian life – Is 6:1-7; Job 42:1-6; 2 Cor 3:18; Heb 12:1-2.

In closing, I would strongly encourage you to take heed of the picture we can see of ourselves in the Pharisee in Lk 18:9-14 and in Jonah - Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-4:11. Jonah did not want to deliver God's message to Ninevah because he wanted God to judge them. He knew that if Ninevah repented and believed in God that God would have mercy on them. Jonah was quick to judge and had no mercy to give. God was long suffering, slow to judge, not desiring that Ninevah perish. When they repented and believed in Him, He was quick and abundant in mercy. In the account of the Pharisee, we see that he judged the other man but would not judge himself. Had the Pharisee not ever looked at a woman lustfully? Jesus said that if you look at a woman lustfully you have committed adultery in your heart. He also said that if you have hated someone, you are guilty of murder in your heart – Mt 5:21-28. The Pharisee had a shallow, short-sided view of sin as do all who are merely outwardly religious. This is the pride of the flesh, and God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. By nature, man is proud. Man judges others instead of himself and thinks he knows when he knows nothing. James 2:13 says that only judgment awaits those who self-righteously judge others instead of themselves. God is holy and has every right to judge. Yet, He waited 120 years before He judged the people of Noah's day, and now He has waited about 2000 years since sinful man put His Son to death. Ultimately, man's great sin is not seeing his own unrighteousness and the perfection of God's Son, Jesus. The religious people, like the Pharisee, said that Jesus, God in human flesh, was the sinner, and they were the righteous ones. So they killed Him. They thought they knew when they really knew nothing! (Proverbs 14:12) Sadly, this same evil is resident in the heart of every man, including you and I, and we too have a tendency to judge others rather than judge ourselves – Rom 2:1-5. Yet, since God's Word is forever settled in

None will perish who put their trust in Christ. His shed blood meets all our sin and guilt. -Ps 51:1-7; Rom 5:1,6-11

heaven, it is an unchangeable fact that God has appointed a time for each man to die and be judged in relation to what he has done with Jesus. To reject Him, to say, "I have no need!" is to side with those who murdered Him – Heb 9:27; Jas 4:4. Only when I abandon any claim to righteousness in myself and look to the pure bounty and grace of God alone, abundant provision is found in Christ,

and I am comforted, oh! so comforted – Mt 15:21-28. The horror and fear which results from seeing I have offended a holy God is relieved only by seeing that the same holy God I have offended has taken my place in judgment on the cross in the Person of Jesus Christ so I can be reconciled to Him to have an intimate relationship with Him, purely by His loving kindness – Gen 39:9c; Ps 51:4; Ps 25:4-7; Rom 5:6-11. None will perish who put their trust in Him. His grace super-abounds above all sin, and His shed blood on the cross is so infinitely precious to God that it fully meets all our uncleanness and guilt. Hallelujah, what a Great God and Savior He is, our Lord Jesus Christ – Titus 2:13!

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