

GENUINE REPENTANCE

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Wurtz's theological study on the nature and foundation of true Christian repentance, emphasizing that genuine repentance is not merely sorrow for sin's consequences but a radical transformation resulting from God's conviction. He stresses that true repentance leads to obedience, concrete restitution, and building one's spiritual life on the solid rock of Christ.

5 Chapters

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GENUINE REPENTANCE

PART 1

CHAPTER 10

GENUINE REPENTANCE (Part 1)

Study Objectives

The first step to being truly born again is repentance. The word “repent” is the first word of the message of the Gospel. It is the first necessary step that everyone must make in order to be saved. The importance of this one subject cannot be overstated- as a person who has not genuinely repented is yet in their sins and is under the wrath of God.

As we begin this study of genuine repentance I purpose to show what repentance is and what repentance is not. We will explore the subject of repentance in such a way as to ensure that all who participate in this study will have a clear understanding as to whether they have genuinely repented or not. We will discover if the repentance of our lives has been total or selective or permanent or temporary. We will examine the motives and fruits of repentance and will probe into whether the repentance we exhibit towards God is biblical and therefore acceptable in God’s sight. We will further explain that there is a limit to the amount of sin that God allows a person or nation before judgment comes to the utmost. This is a consistent teaching in scripture that will be quite new for most Christians, but has existed since the book of Genesis.

Revolt against Repentance

The single greatest obstacle to genuine repentance is pride. Human beings by and large simply refuse to humble themselves before God. Pride, in fact, is at the very root of iniquity itself. Pride creates a refusal to submit to anyone and repentance requires great submission to God. The pride of a persons hearts can so blind them- that they are enabled to successfully ignore the continual warnings of an infinitely powerful God and in turn ignore His perfect wrath. True repentance requires brokenness before God and an agreement with Him that we have in fact sinned against Him. It requires examining ourselves to discover the depths of our wickedness in the sight of God- this is an act that pride will reject. Genuine repentance requires that we humble ourselves before God and man and confess our sins before them; whereas pride wages war against these necessities and refuses to comply with God’s demands. This is the true essence of hardness of hearts. Every time God convicts of sin and leads to genuine repentance and the person refuses to repent- the chances are lessened that they ever will repent. Resisting God when He calls for repentance only strengthens pride until the pride of the heart is stronger than the call to repent. As this happens on an ongoing basis it becomes less and less likely that the proud person ever will repent; while at the same time pride tells the person they can repent when they get ready. This is the delusion that has won millions of souls to hell. It is the apex of pride to believe in our heart that we can repent before a holy God when we get ready. God responds to such behavior by hardening the person’s heart when they reject the Gospel message. Most people do not consider themselves to be proud, but this is also a delusion. Any amount of pride sufficient to keep a person

from humbling themselves before God is sufficient to warrant God's eternal wrath.

The Wrath of God is Revealed

The book of Genesis tells us how everything began. The book of Revelation tells us how everything is going to end; but the book of Romans tells us how to be saved from God's wrath. The book begins by informing us that God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all people who suppress the truth by their sinfulness (Romans 1:18). No matter who the person is they have a certain amount of knowledge of God (light) that they are accountable to God for how they handle it. Jesus sums this up when He said... And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:47-48). This is a description of the varying levels of punishment in hell based upon how much information we knew about God. The more we are aware of concerning God the more we are accountable for.

ALL Are Without Excuse

Roman's teaches us that every human being born on the earth has some basic knowledge of God. We read in Romans 1:19-21... For the truth about God is known to them instinctively. God has put this knowledge in their hearts. From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God (NLT). Everyone is born knowing there is a God and most people immediately begin suppressing that knowledge. The pagan natives who commit all sorts of wickedness are utterly without excuse before God. God will hold them accountable for the truth they know and of a certainty they are not walking in the light of their conscience or in the light of nature.

This rebellion against such little truth is far more than enough to warrant a sentence of eternal damnation. How much then would you suppose that the wrath of God would be revealed to those who have a bible? When you consider that only since the printing press was developed (the last 400 years) have bibles even been available in the world to individual families, etc. Going all the way back to Sodom and Gomorrah they did not have bibles. As a matter of fact, Jesus said that had Sodom and Gomorrah heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ they would have repented long ago and it would still be a city today. Other nations destroyed by God's wrath would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Jesus went on to say that because of that- these people God judged will rise up in judgment against those who reject repentance after hearing the Gospel (Matthew 11:21-24).

So what then shall come of those who have been enlightened (made to see literally), tasted of heavenly things, received the Holy Spirit, the good (rhema) word of God, and the power (dunamis) of God? To whom much is given much is required. The peril of an unrepentant person who is pagan is tremendous; but what shall we make of the impending doom and utter destruction upon those who have been thoroughly acquainted with the things of God and have familiarized themselves with Him and yet rejected Him as they have known Him? What will be the fate of those who have passed by over fifty thousand churches in their lifetime and yet rejected every reminder that they ought to repent. Every time they see a minister on TV or a Christian bumper sticker.

Every time they found that old bible while sorting through the closet and yet tossed it up higher on a shelf to forget God? What shall come of those who have mocked the messengers of God and despised his word? In Hebrews 10:27-31 we read... They who despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The Cup of Iniquity

Many people do not realize that God has placed a limit upon the amount of sin that He will allow a person or a nation commit. The strength of this iniquity is based upon the amount of 'light' that the person or nation had in order to know to do right. The more about God that you know, the faster the cup fills up. Both individual people and this nation are sinning as though there was no legal limit on sin. But every person and nation has been allotted a measure of sin.

In Genesis 4:13 Cain tells God "my punishment is more than I can bear." This is the first occurrence of this Hebrew word (here translated 'punishment'). In every other passage in the bible but 3 it is translated as "iniquity." Iniquity means perverseness, evil, or lawlessness. Immediately in scripture iniquity is proportional to judgment. In other words- iniquities are like judgment debts that have to be paid. The second time it is used is in Genesis 15:16 where we read... But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. This is because all impenitent sinners are treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath (Romans 2:5). Matthew Henry comments on this saying there is a time when people in their wickedness are "ripe" for judgment. The sins of Sodom were great before the Lord and they were brought to ruin quickly as was also the Jews when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 CE. The Amorites took a while for their sin to fill up and therefore Abraham was not able to go in and possess the land yet. Jesus told the Pharisees... Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Paul also used this illustration in I Thessalonians 2:14-16... For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. Individuals, peoples, and nations that refuse to repent are "filling up their sins."

How Full is The Cup?

As a nation we for certain are fastly filling up the cup of iniquity as an invitation to God's wrath upon us. Has there ever been a nation upon the earth that had as much 'light' as does America and yet showed the level of contempt for it as we? Have there ever been a people who have as much knowledge of God as individuals as does the average American and yet continue in their sins? In America God has made Himself known on every hand. Many sin hotspots are within

eyeshot of a church or a cross. If Sodom had bibles, as does America- would they have vexed Lot with their sin? What if there was a church in every community of the city- would they have so sinned? What about legitimate Christian TV and radio? An abundance of Christians?

In his book Repentance the first Word of the Gospel, Richard Owen Roberts asks a most riveting question to both impenitent individuals and nations. He asks "Have you ever considered what it would be to be under the wrath of God to the utmost? Do you have any idea how close to full your personal measure of sin is? It is possible that it is precariously close to full at this moment. It is possible that one more sin is all that is allotted you. Your final sin could be your refusal to repent right now."

How much longer will God extend his hand of mercy to us? How much longer can we refuse to repent? Many have not just read the bible, but millions have even seen the Passion of Christ and a realistic depiction of Christ's sufferings. What level of judgment are we at based upon how much we know in comparison to a pagan native who has never seen a bible? Could this be America's final altar call? Could this be everyone's final altar call?

Part 5

CHAPTER 14

GENUINE REPENTANCE (PART 5)

The Foundation of Repentance

The foundation is the base on which structures are built. It is the support for the walls and other components of a building. No building is any stronger than its foundation. If the foundation is not properly placed, the entire structure is in question. If it is not placed deep in the earth it will be carried away by the elements. If it is not laid strong it will not support the weight of the structure. Repentance from dead works, faith towards God, and the accompanying elements of these two serve as the foundation of our relationship with God. (Hebrews 6:1, 2) It is the foundation that we are told not to be laying over and over. It is a foundation that is to be laid and then built upon. Unfortunately, many never take the time to ensure that the foundation of repentance and faith towards God is properly laid and in turn they end up with the situation Jesus speaks of in Luke 6. Here we read... And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great. (Luke 6:46-49)

Digging Deep

Genuine repentance is a radical change of life that results in God gloriously transforming a person from death to life, darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto the power of God. (Acts 26:18) It is a deep process. It requires a tremendous amount of convincing and conviction. The minister brings a message to convince and the Holy Spirit convicts of sin. The two are in most cases totally dependent one on the other. The Holy Spirit has been known to bring great conviction of sin apart from a person hearing a sermon- but certainly no minister can bring conviction of sin without the Holy Spirit. Deep conviction that brings godly sorrow leads a person to repentance. Deep repentance is not sorrow for the consequences of sin that has occurred as a result of their disobedience, but is a sorrow brought about by God Himself and makes God the center of repentance. God is the one who was sinned against. God is the primary offended party in all sin. God is the one to whom we must turn to for relief from our sins. These are but a few aspects of genuine godly sorrow that leads to life. On the contrary, there are many that believe they have repented when all they were is in some way 'sorry' for what their sin caused or sorry they were caught. Genuine and deep repentance is a condition in which a person sees their sin as God sees it, changes their mind about it, repulsively forsakes it, is sorely vexed because of it, and turns from it to God for relief from it. Repentance is turning from trusting in yourself, which results in your

sinfulness- to trusting in God and His righteousness. Salvation that does not include true and genuine repentance is no salvation at all because it is the foundation. Genuine repentance leaves a person feeling such about their past sin that they seek to make restitution or reconciliation whenever possible for the things they have done (i.e. Zacchaeus Luke 19:8). They also realize how vile they formerly behaved and immediately seek to impress on others that they have forsaken the old life. This is quite different than a person who is embarrassed to say they repented. A person who genuinely repents is embarrassed for who they used to be, not who they are now.

A Foundation on the Rock

Jesus Christ must be the chief cornerstone of any foundation we lay down. In genuine repentance we turn from sin to righteousness and from the power of Satan to the power of God. The life that we now live is in accordance to the teachings of Jesus Christ. We do not simply call him Lord, Lord; but He truly is the Lord of our life. We confirm this by doing the things that He says. In our obedience we exalt Him to His rightful place of King and in that submission we are made citizens of the Kingdom of God. Our submission to Christ is what allows for the Kingdom of Christ to come near to those whom we minister to. If we don't submit to God and His authority, how could we ever be ambassadors with His authority?

Foundationless Faith

In Luke 6:48 we read... "But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man without a foundation..." Repentance that does not result in obedience to God is not genuine repentance. Disobedience is regarded with disdain to the truly born again. If you do not hate sin- you have no real foundation with which to walk in obedience. If you live in denial that you need to repent you have not hated your sin as you should.

When David saw his sin for what it was he did not react with denial. He made no excuses. He gave no explanations. He knew that sin, as it were, comes in many flavors, but the core 'substance' is rebellion against God. That is the 'substance' of the sin itself. The 'flavor' is immaterial. It is all the result of the rebellious law of sin that is in our members that desires to rebel against God's law simply because HE decreed it. The sinful nature is gratified by rebellion- it is the 'flesh's meat. The 'meat' of the born again is to do the will of God. Understanding this point is a main key in gaining the victory over sin and hating sin as we should. When we stop focusing on the 'flavor' of the sin (covetousness, fornication, hatred, etc.) and key in on the substance of sin we realize that the sin we commit gratified the flesh because it rebelled against God. David understood this clearly and answered the prophet... "I have sinned against the LORD." Later he wrote... "Against God alone have I done this evil in His sight." (Psalm 51:4) The foundation of repentance is only as strong as our hatred of sin and our desire to walk in obedience to the faith.

Loving Righteousness and Hating Iniquity

When you have genuinely seen sin as God sees it and your mind is properly changed about it- that change should result in utter disdain for sin. It will be hatred based in the knowledge that your sin was against a God that is wholly good. You will view it as malice projected at the God that has bestowed upon you every good and perfect gift. (Romans 2:4; James 1:17) When you finally survey the wondrous love of God and the extent to which His anger has been restrained from

consuming you; and His divine providence has sustained you- you ought to pour contempt on all your pride. As Paris Reidhead once stated... "Our preaching is not to convince good men that they are in trouble with a mean, bad God; but its to convince bad men that they deserve the wrath and anger of a good God." (paraphrased) And in that moment of understanding the true meaning of sin as a whole- you should hate sin no matter what 'flavor' it is. The realization of the enormity of your sin against God and His holiness; the revelation that not only was the God you were sinning against infinitely holy, but willing to take upon Himself the very penalty of your sin- ought convince any sinner that he or she utterly deserves hell. One ought to marvel at how a God as holy as He is would be mindful of sinners that are bent on profaning that which is holy. A sinner seeks to sin simply for the fulfillment of desecrating that which is not yet tainted with sin- so that in that defilement the flesh can be gratified. When you realize this one fact- you will hate sin as it is. The enemies' whole strategy is to camouflage the true nature of sin and present it as something it is not. Sin is rebellion against God.

Genuine repentance has a cultivating effect upon the heart. Going through our lives at times and earnestly seeking God to reveal areas of our lives that we have refused to repent will point us to areas of hardness that have come about by sin. Allowing God to show us places where we quench the Spirit and harden ourselves will stir the fallow ground as we repent of those things.

Radical Repentance

When you radically repent your zeal for God combined with your hatred of sin will cause you to take aggressive steps in fortifying yourself against sin. Josiah was a radical individual when it comes to repentance. He destroyed the groves and the high places in Israel. Not only did he hate the sin, but also he (as it were) "hated even the garment spotted by sin" (Jude 23). What does that mean? He distances himself from sin as much as in him is. The facilities of sin and the vehicles of sin are utterly forsaken. The stepping stones back to sin are removed. Failure to remove these facilities, vehicles, and stepping-stones is ultimately an indicator that you are not interested in victory over sin- but in word only, and not in deed and in truth.

Many talk repentance- but few are willing to go through their life and eliminate the provisions and stumbling blocks for their sin. They convince themselves that they can 'handle' certain weights that allow sin to close the gap in the race we are running and knock us off the track (Hebrews 12). Josiah knew that if the groves and high places remained that Israel would keep stumbling over the same old sins. If you want to stop plowing iniquity (Job 4:8) you need to rid yourself of the 'equipment.'

Exercising Your Senses

In Hebrews 6 we learn that we are not to be laying the foundation of repentance over and over again. We are to go on unto perfection. In the closing verses of Chapter 5 we read that growth towards perfection requires that we move from the milk to the meat of God's word. This can only happen if you exercise your senses. You have to take control of your 5 senses. You have to control your eyes, ears, etc. You have to train your senses to discern good and evil. This is how a person moves towards Christian perfection. When a person controls their senses as they should it make it easier to control the tongue, as we should. The one who controls the tongue is a perfect man (James 3:2). But, the tongue can no man tame for it is unruly evil and full of deadly poison

(3:8). When you begin talking your heart is exposed. When your heart is exposed, what comes forth from the good treasure of it- is what has been carried in through the senses (Proverbs 4:23; Luke 6:45). The tongue totes out what the senses take in.

When you radically repent you will hate sin to the place that as much as in you is – you have fortified yourself from an onslaught of temptations. You will recognize that if Timothy needed to flee youthful lusts so do you. If Paul had to bring his body into subjection- so do you. You will do everything in your power to not just “think” you stand, but you will “take heed” lest you fall. (I Corinthians 10:12) The context of this passage is temptation. Matthew Henry comments here saying... “He that thinks he stands should not be confident and secure, but upon his guard. Others have fallen, and so may we. And then we are most likely to fall when we are most confident of our own strength, and thereupon most apt to be secure, and off our guard. Distrust of himself, putting him at once upon vigilance and dependence on God, is the Christian's best security against all sin.”

Victory '101'

The attitude of genuine repentance is found in the Psalm of David who wrote: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.” (Psalm 101:3) To set your sin in front of you is to keep laying the foundation of repentance over and over again. No one is strong enough to keep access to gross sin in their midst and continually resist temptation. Unfortunately many have already subconsciously planned to return to their sin. They would reject the notion if asked and defensively react when it is mentioned. But the truth is, when you have allowed the stepping stones to your besetting sins to remain in place when you could have removed them it is evidence that backsliding remains an option. Time will tell. Everyone needs a certain distance between them and their besetting sin. The distance between you and your besetting sin is proportional to the length of your desire to repent. Have you destroyed the groves and high places in your life? Why not? David said, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” Why? Because he knew he was weak at times and vulnerable to sin. He guarded himself. He said wickedness would not cleave unto him. That Hebrew word means to “Catch by pursuit.” This was David's approach and as he stated- wickedness never did catch and overtake him.

Part 6

CHAPTER 15

GENUINE REPENTANCE (PART 6)

Have You Really Repented?

In our previous section we discovered that we must lay aside certain weights in our life in order to maintain the victory over sin. We need to take control over our senses and 'discern' between good and evil. We need to continually be turning from sin as the world brings it up before us- and we must not set any evil thing before our eyes.

When we cease to have certain weights in our life taking up much of our time- that time must be used for the edification of our spiritual lives. The enemy loves it when we simply 'shift' our weights around and gain no real spiritual ground. This is particularly dangerous in our generation because the world has so many enticing things to offer as a substitute for true joy and happiness. Christians set down weights that were a stumbling block to them and then pick up something they see as less harmful, but in fact may end up coming between them and God as much as the thing that was originally causing them to stumble. This is simply load redistribution. Anytime we lay something down that was hindering us we need to replace it with something that will edify us.

Turning From Sin To God

It is not enough to simply turn away from our sins. We have to turn to God. Jesus talked about a person in whom was a demon and after it was cast out the demon returned and found the 'house' swept and clean. He then went and invited seven more wicked spirits than himself to enter in and the state of that man was worst than the beginning (Matthew 12:45). This is a picture of a person wanting free from sin and Satan and not making Christ the Lord of their life. People don't want sin because of its effects; and when liberated they don't want to live righteously either. This throws the door to the devil wide open. God liberates us from sin for the purpose of coming and communing with us. If we do not begin to seek God's face and follow Him we are wide open to the enemy. This 'halting between two opinions' is a dangerous place for anyone who has come to God for deliverance from sin. God delivers them and when they get relief from the burden of the sin and the consequences of sin- they turn right back and end up more vile than they were before (II Peter 2:22). This is why it is dangerous to hear a repentance based message and not turn to Christ.

Liberation from sin is only the beginning. God wants us free to walk with Him in communion and fellowship. Christ did not die on the cross to simply stop men and women from going to hell- He did it to restore the fellowship with man that was there between man and God in the garden. The 'good news' of the Gospel is not so much that man can avoid hell- as it is that man can be restored to fellowship with God. The heart cry of the Gospel is "Be ye reconciled unto God." (II Corinthians 5:20) God desires fellowship with man and has paid a dear price to receive it.

When people simply pray off the conviction and return to their sin they are always worse off than before (II Peter 2:20). Sadly, this can happen on a weekly basis. In a matter of months a person can become so hardened and vile because of their rebellion to a message of repentance- that they have near reprobated themselves. God says repent and the devil is there with lies. They act on the message and then turn back again. This process has a hardening effect on a person as it also did with Pharaoh.

'Repentance' for All the Wrong Reasons

One of the great frustrations for any minister of the Gospel is to spend countless hours seeking God, ministering, and praying with people at the altar and yet they weep and pray and then go out and return to their sin. Not that ministers are frustrated with the lost efforts, for God is glorified in our lives for our obedience to preach what He tells us. The frustration is that the person has endured another encounter with God without being changed. Many are 'moved' or 'challenged'- but they are not changed. This no doubt stems from wrong motives in repenting to begin with. The end of all genuine repentance is the restoration of fellowship with God. Wrong motives lead to 'temporary repentance' and a relapse into sin that makes the person more vile than before. Dealing with these false motives will go a long way in preventing this perpetual hardening of the heart.

"I'm 'Sorry' for My Sins?" ('Common' Sorrow)

One of the great myths about repentance is that sorrow is the same as repentance. Although sorrow is part of the process of repentance- it must be understood that sorrow itself is not repentance. To further understand this we must also realize that there are two different types of sorrow biblically: 1) Godly sorrow that leads to life not to be repented of. 2) Worldly sorrow that leads to death. Richard Owens Roberts in the book "Repentance The First Word Of The Gospel" writes, "One can experience the deepest possible 'remorse' over sin and yet still not repent. Both Esau and Judas demonstrate this. Indeed, we must all come to distinguish between the sorrow that comes from being caught and the sorrow that comes from a deep, inward hatred of sin and longing for the glory of God that is the distinguishing feature of the regenerate person." Many are sorry for the pain the sin caused or sorry for the loss they sustained from their sin- but this is NOT a godly sorrow. This is a self-centered sorrow that is common in the world. People 'sorrow' every day over the bad consequences of their actions. Countless tears are shed by people who sustained loss in their sin. Some loose their health, wealth, friends, and family- it is a common sorrow. People realize that their health is in jeopardy and make all sorts of New Year's resolutions to "turn over a new leaf," but this is not repentance either.

False Sorrow Brings False Assurance

It would be near to impossible to come as close to repenting as did Judas and still not be converted. He made restitution by bringing back the thirty pieces of silver. He confessed that he had betrayed the innocent blood. What horror and anguish must have gripped his soul at that moment, but it was too late. Just as Esau he found no place of repentance once the wheels of sin were set in motion- so likewise Judas sold out his birthright to be an Apostle of our Lord for almost nothing- and like Esau, another was given his place. Moreover, his confession was to men only and not to God. We read of no account of Judas addressing God about this matter. He did not call

upon the God that would abundantly pardon if we would simply repent. He never declared himself before God to be a wretched sinner. Matthew Henry writes concerning these things saying, "To his own shame, he confesses that he had sinned, in betraying this blood. He does not lay the blame on any one else; does not say, "You have sinned, in hiring me to do it;" but takes it all to himself; "I have sinned, in doing it." Thus far Judas went toward his repentance, yet it was not to salvation. He confessed, but not to God, did not go to him, and say, I have sinned, Father, against heaven. He confessed the betraying of innocent blood, but did not confess that wicked love of money, which was the root of this evil. There are those who betray Christ, and yet justify themselves in it, and so come short of Judas." The man sorrowed until he hanged himself and never once repented of the root of his sin-, which was the idolatry of greed. When he tried to return the money the leaders replied "What is that to us?" What madness was in the mind of this man who had watched our Lord love people and then be tempted to sell him out for his own greed. The enemy paid 30 silver coins for the worst sin ever committed.

Godly Sorrow that Leads to Life

Godly sorrow is a God-centered sorrow. It concerns itself first and foremost with the offense towards God, and man is at a distant second. When Peter denied the Lord three times- the rooster sounded and the Lord looked at Peter. In that moment Peter's heart smote him and he wept bitterly. The Greek word in this passage could have been translated 'violently.' It was a sorrow that brought about a change. It was such that once he was converted- he strengthened his brethren. That word strengthened in this passage means to "establish them in the right direction." This is the difference between one who genuinely repents and one who has had a sorrow that leads to death. Genuine sorrow that leads to repentance will bring forth fruit. People who genuinely repent and are born again seek to turn others to Christ. This is the opposite of a high maintenance and low impact 'conversion.'

Fear only Convinces Some

Fear is often a great cause for people turning from their sins, but unless there is genuine repentance fear is a short-lived reason to repent. Hell fire messages have brought many to repentance- but just as many have heard and still turned back to sin. In time people become so hardened to preaching that they can stare hell in the face and not change. God can bring them to such a place of fear and trembling at the thought of hell- that they hurry themselves to the altar; and then as they find relief from the 'message' they straitway forget the pangs and sufferings.

Unless a persons sees their sin as God sees it and agrees with Him concerning it- there is no repentance. Fear is a legitimate tactic for plucking souls out of the fire (Jude 23), but the person must turn from their sin to genuine faith in Christ. Again, Richard Owens Roberts writes concerning hell fire preaching, "It is not without consequence that neither John the Baptist or Jesus came preaching saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Hell is at hand." God's purpose in demanding our repentance is not that we might escape from the damnation of hell but that we might experience the "change of mind" which characterizes the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus preached hell more than heaven- and yet wept over Jerusalem because of their refusal to repent. The people would not weep bitterly over their sins- so He wept for them.

The Cleansing Effects of Bitter Weeping

It has been rightly said that tears ought not to be wiped away until they have had time to do their work. When we see our sin as it is we will grieve deeply for how we have hurt God. Not weeping because we have to suffer the consequences of our sins, but weeping for the pain and suffering that it caused Christ on the cross. When we radically repent we will begin to believe that Christ died for our own personal sins and not merely the sins of the whole world. Our sin will become personal between us and God. Many people cry for minutes or hours over their sins. Some cry for days. Yet others cast their tears as far as the east is from the west and immediately begin to claim the joys of the Lord before the enormity of their sin has had a chance to really sink in.

What cleansing effect has bitter weeping had on your life? Does sin grieve you? Are you vexed by sin? Have you heeded the message of repentance? Has the message hardened you more and more? Have you laid aside the weights that you know are besetting you? Have you kept yourself busy as not to become idle and a point of contact for the enemy to tempt you? Idle time is the great enemy of repentance and the great ally of sin. Do you keep your mind on the Lord? Are you exercising your senses? Are you casting down vain imaginations (thoughts)? Have you wept for your sin until you would rather die than do it again? Are you setting evil things before your eyes and making provision for the flesh? Are you closer to God now than you were a year ago? The answer to these questions and other like questions will go a long way in aiding us in our discovery of whether we have really repented in godly sorrow- or had a common sorrow for sin that all who are in the world display.

Part 7

CHAPTER 16

GENUINE REPENTANCE (PART 7)

Hunger, Humility, and Holiness

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

(Matthew 5:6)

The natural course of life assures us that a newborn baby WILL be hungry (I Peter 1:23). Newborn Christians are to desire the sincere milk of the word of God that they may grow thereby (I Peter 2:2). As that word is taken and applied to the person's life and walked in, then and only then does it become spiritual food. That hearing and doing of God's word produces spiritual growth. Jesus said that His 'meat' was to DO the will of the Father that sent Him (John 4:34). And if we are born of the Spirit, the Father's will- will be our will also. The cry of the Newborn Child of God is, "What must we do?" They likewise begin to exclaim, "Men shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." The word that proceeds from the mouth of God produces life in us when we are doers of the work and not simply hearers. In other words, our 'meat' is not to just 'hear', but DO the word. It is not 'meat' to us until it is lived out in faith through obedience. When we take the simple commands of the milk and begin to use that word to make difference between sin and righteousness, holy and unholy, and sacred and profaned by disciplining our senses to discern these things- God will begin to increase our understanding and our ability to handle deeper truths of God's word. To graduate from the milk to the meat is to have no need that any man teach you, but the anointing which you will receive shall teach you all things (I John 2:27).

An Appetite for God

Jesus chose hunger as the analogy with which to describe the desire for God that brings blessedness. Hunger is a powerful driving force in a human being. Spiritual hunger is one of the mechanisms by which we can measure spiritual health. In the natural course of life, once an appetite has been lost, there is great concern of some other sickness or problem. So it is with our spiritual health. The enemy has a whole medicine cabinet full of spiritual appetite suppressants. Worldliness in general suppresses a Christian's appetite for the things of God and increases the appetite for sin. Secular media is a serious spiritual appetite suppressant. Nearly everything that comes from the secular media of radio, television, and Internet is antichrist to the core. It is electronic worldliness. The images of the world- the message and ministry of the world is preached through these media. Christians that feed on these things soon become grossly devoid of an appetite for God and righteousness. They are cold in spirit; they are secular, fleshly and carnal- ever struggling to walk in the power and anointing of God. Some have given up the fight. Some have lost all desire for the Shekinah glory of God. For Cain- sin was crouching at the door. For many Christians sin is flooding into their homes and into the door of their hearts. Cain was told to

master sin- but sin is mastering many Christians. Why? They do not resist it. They desire it. They befriend it. They long for it. It is on their mind continually. They hunger and thirst for it. Why? They have cultivated their appetite for worldliness and it has overthrown their desire for God. They go through the motions powerlessly and many are used to living without the Spirit. Their heart burns with all manner of sin- but the burning for God is all but gone. They have not mastered sin- sin has mastered them.

Pride- the Archenemy of Humility

Pride can spend a thousand years in Hell and not repent (Revelation 20:3). It is absolutely impossible for a proud person to repent. A proud person will lie and deceive their way out of repenting every time. They will blame others for their sins- even the victims themselves. Proud men and women will redefine sin and call it everything but what it is. Proud people “make mistakes” and have “lapses in judgment,” but the humble declare plainly that there is no excuse for their sins- only regret for having committed them. One of the greatest talents that the enemy possesses is his ability to twist meanings and dumb down sins by renaming them. Satan is the ultimate wordsmith. Changing the words dumbs down the sting of the sin when we hear it and immunizes us to the feelings of guilt and shame. Moreover, the proud are more concerned for their own reputation than God’s and would rather vindicate themselves than God and His infallible word. The proud are defensive of their sins.

Self-defense and repentance can never coexist. Richard Owens Roberts writes, “A tremendous consequential myth that we frequently see illustrated in our day is the myth that it is possible for somebody to be repentant and self-defensive at the same time. Those two things can never be put together. You will never find true repentance and self-defense linked. Whenever a person is seemingly repentant and yet busily defends himself, you can be sure his repentance is not genuine.” When people start pointing fingers and making up excuses you can be sure they have not repented. When we truly see our sin for what it is we agree with God about it and turn to Him for relief from it. Pride is at the center of excuse making.

Brokenness

There is a place of brokenness that we can reach under the enormous weight of our sin that the pride and self-defensiveness is utterly crushed and self is broken in pieces. And in that brokenness there is an abandonment of our own reputation and a vindication of God’s. The truth is easily told-, as there is no need felt to keep running from God and men. Unconditional surrender is the battle cry of the broken. And out of those pieces a glimmer of light of hope begins to shine. The mask of the well-polished look of pride that God once hated is replaced with a broken and contrite expression that no longer cares what any thing save God alone. It is that place of humility that comes from the revelation of who God REALLY is.

The Cross

When I survey the wondrous Cross on which the Prince of Glory died- my richest gain I count as loss and pour contempt on all my pride. Never before or since has such a dichotomy of innocence and torture met on earth. It was at that Cross where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away- It is there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day. Through the finished work of the cross we by faith have died with Him (Galatians 2:20). It was the old rugged

cross that we cherish and the precious blood that was shed for our sins. The cross is the hammer that breaks a hardened heart.

Before Christ went to the cross He suffered the night in the Garden of Gethsemane- the place of the crushing. We all need a Gethsemane. We all need to take up our cross and follow Christ. A.W. Tozer was once quoted as saying, "There is one thing for certain you knew if you saw a man carrying his cross out of the city- you knew he wasn't coming back." When the broken take up their cross and leave the city of the old life-- they will never be back. Once the 'old man' is finally dead that old look of pride will be replaced with the glory of God. The priceless radiance of God's blessed approval- will adorn the countenance and illuminate the darkness. When you reach that level of brokenness God will dwell among you. God will inhabit a broken Temple any day. It seems He prefers it that way. You see, man looketh on the outward, but God looks on the heart. A proud heart is a hardened heart. When God sees a proud look He sees it first in the heart. God will give a very special grace to the humble. He will plead their cause. He will walk among them.

Holiness

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8)

Leonard Ravinhill once stated that Christians in this generation are more afraid of holiness than they are of sin. If the reality of that is true then it would lend to reason that people would protect themselves more against holiness than they would sin. The natural progression of this is that Christians have opted to err on the side of sin- as a form of caution. This is a serious problem because the power is in the Holiness. In an atmosphere where sin is tolerated- God is not present. God does not tolerate sin. When holiness is not present Christians drift into emotionalism to replace the moving of the Spirit. "God is my girlfriend" like songs begin to replace songs about the blood and the cross. Modern "Positive" Christian music rarely convicts of sin. The emphasis is placed on the mood that the lyrics and the instruments can produce. This is exactly what the world does with their music.

God is Not Listening

God will not as much as hear the prayer of a person who regards iniquity in their heart (Psalm 66:18). To conduct a service without God would be like going to visit a person at their house and carrying on a conversation with their empty chair because their gone (Luke 13:35). It is the oldest stunt in the book to try to keep carrying on when God is not moving- as though He is. Isaiah 1:15 spells this out clearly... And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

They Clean the Outside of the Cup

The world is constantly trying to bend our minds into conformity with its sin (Romans 12:2a). If the enemy can't tempt us into a full blown carnal mind, he seems to settle for a double mind that both loves and hates sin (James 1:8). The enemy doesn't mind if we appear to hate sin on the outside and yet entertain sin in the heart. As it is written... Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness (Luke 11:39). The outside of the cup is the part that is seen- but the inside carries the life giving water. To pour water from a dirty cup into other people's cup is to taint all the Holy Spirit is doing through your life with

that 'dirt.'

The Power of Purity

It is a fearful thing to think that a generation of Christians that need the power of God unlike any other would be turning away from the very path of life required to walk in that power. Pentecostalism was birthed in the fires of holiness preaching and living. Leonard Ravinhill said it well when he said that, "true Christianity has not been weighed in the balance and found wanting- it has been tried, found difficult, and rejected!" Christianity today is a mere shell of what it was 100 years ago. It is more like worldliness with a Christian flavor in a lot of cases. Youth all over the nation and the world are turning to false religions because 'modern Christianity' does not have the depth that other religions offer. Why? Because the enemy has filled the Church with sin and they don't have the purity to preach the 'real message' with the 'real power.' They do not water down the message because the people won't hear it- it gets watered down when we don't live pure enough to preach it. This modern generation wants to be preached to- but it's hard to preach from the devil's playpen of sin. Hunger, humility, and holiness governs the threshold of preaching and teaching. When once again there is a hunger for God- that issues forth from brokenness unto holiness- we will see powerful manifestations of God's glory changing sin wrecked lives. The world is waiting. God is watching. This is the last days. What-will-we-do?

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