

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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REPENTANCE — A CONDITION FOR SALVATION

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Pursuing salvation in accordance with God's plan is a personal responsibility, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). Each individual who would obtain the salvation offered in and through Jesus Christ (II Tim. 2:10), must obey the Gospel and live a godly life. The Lord will take "...vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 1:7-9). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11,12). Jesus promised, "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Our study involves **REPENTANCE** as a **CONDITION** of salvation. The very fact that many will be lost (Matt. 7:13,14) is proof that salvation is conditional. Among the conditions upon which God offers salvation is a change in one's heart and life through repentance — the turning from sin and turning to God in submission to His will. Repentance is a much broader subject than what many people realize. Let us look closer at what the Bible teaches on this most important point.

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE

Repentance is necessary because of SIN! If sin had not entered the world (Gen. 3:1-5), there would have been no need for repentance. But, when God closed the door to Eden because of sin, He opened the door to repentance that man could be forgiven of sin through the merits of the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7). "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:1,2). Repentance is necessary for the forgiveness of sins on the part of the alien sinner, "...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). Repentance is also necessary for the forgiveness of sins on the part of the erring Christian. The erring Simon was told, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). Sin is universal, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23); (Compare I John. 1:7-10); therefore, ALL must repent. Paul stated, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts

17:30). Peter warned, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). Those that do not repent will perish. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3,5). God will not forgive sin that is not repented of; therefore, that unforgiven sin will cause one to perish! (Compare I John 5:16,17). The sinner must repent or be unprepared at the Judgment. Paul stated the reason why all must repent, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Given the necessity of repentance to man's salvation, it is not surprising that repentance has always been a part of God's message to man. In every dispensation, God has commanded his messengers to preach repentance to people in sin. Those who responded to the word of God in genuine repentance received God's forgiveness and were restored to favor and fellowship with God. But, those who refused to repent remained separated from God and doomed to eternal destruction.

Noah and the prophets in the

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Repentance...



Editorial...

WATER BAPTISM AND WORKS

There are several different types of “works” mentioned in the New Testament. There are:

1. *Works of the flesh* (Gal. 5:19-21). These are immoral and oppose the kingdom. They keep one from being saved.

2. *Works of Satan or works of darkness* (I John 3:8). They originate with Satan. They keep one from being saved.

3. *Works of moral goodness* (Titus 3:5). The world recognize these as good works and they even help others. But they have no power to save in and of themselves. Anyone, even a non-Christian, can do these works. They will not or can not save.

4. *Works of the Law of Moses* (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:19-25). They cannot save and were never intended to save. They simply identify and condemn sin. They show man’s inability to save himself.

5. *Works of man’s righteousness* (Rom. 10:1-3). These were designed by man, thinking they would draw one closer to God. They, likewise, cannot save.

None of these works justify men before God — never have, never will. I have never taught they would save and have never heard anyone else teach they would save or justify one before God. But, there is another “kind of work” not mentioned in these five.

6. *Works of God.* These are works He designed and commands man to obey. These are sometimes called “works of faith.” It is these works (commands) that man must obey in order to be saved. We do not trust in our works or performance, but rather, we trust (have faith) in God’s word and therefore OBEY Him, i.e. we OBEY HIS WORKS — the works He command us to do.

The works of God include:

Faith. Faith is a work designed by God (John 6:29). It is not man’s work, it is God’s work. It is a work

God commands man to do. Without man performing this work, he cannot be saved. When man complies with this “work,” he cannot say he has earned salvation.

Repentance. Repentance is a work designed by God (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38). It is essential to salvation. It is a work God commands man to do. Without man performing this work, he cannot be saved. When man complies with this “work,” he cannot say he has earned salvation.

Confession of faith in Jesus. Confession is a work designed by God (Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37). It is a work God commands man to do. Without man performing this work, he cannot be saved. When man complies with this “work,” he cannot say he has earned salvation.

Baptism in water for the remission of sins. Baptism is a work designed by God (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Mark 16:16). It is a work God commands man to do. Without man performing this work, he cannot be saved. When man complies with this “work,” he cannot say he has earned salvation.

These are not man’s works, they are God’s works. These are works God commands man to do.

We’re not trying to emphasize water baptism over the other works of God, but since that one work is under attack and is denied by many, it obviously requires more attention.

Notice these significant points concerning water baptism:

Without water baptism, there is no “*newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4). One either lives an “old life” of sin or a “new life” in Christ. The new life in Christ follows baptism. It does not precede baptism.

Without water baptism, there is no “*forgiveness of sins*” (Acts 2:38). Since one cannot be saved without having their sins forgiven, water baptism is obviously essential to salvation. Forgiveness of sins never fol-

lows any other action than water baptism. This is true throughout the whole New Testament.

Without water baptism, there is no *union with Christ* (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3). Since salvation is only offered to those who are united with Christ, this makes baptism essential to salvation. Baptism puts one INTO Christ where salvation is found.

Without water baptism, *one cannot be saved.* Jesus makes this clear in Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Some try to deny this verse belongs in the Bible. They see the great damage it does to their “faith only” doctrine, so they try desperately to dismiss it. However, there is nothing taught in this verse that is not taught in the rest of the New Testament in passages such as Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, I Peter 3:21, Col. 2:12, Rom. 6:6,17-18. But even if Mark 16:16 did not exist, the case for water baptism has not been hurt and the case for “faith only” has not been helped.

Without water baptism, there’s no *calling on the name of the Lord* (Acts 22:16). To call on the name of the Lord simply means that we rely on and obey the commands of the Lord. Jesus is the one who commanded baptism, so we call upon His name when we obey His command to be baptized. In baptism, one is calling on the Lord’s name. Shall one deny baptism’s validity (essentiality) simply because he doesn’t want it to have anything to do with salvation?

Without water baptism, there’s no *adding one to the body of Christ* (Acts 2:41,47). No other passages speak of one being added to the body of the saved (the church) other than when one is baptized. One is not added to the church at the point of faith, not at the point of repentance, nor at the point of confession.

Without water baptism, there’s no *washing away of sins* (Acts 22:16). The water of baptism does not wash sins away. One’s sins are washed away by the blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7). The question is, when does Christ’s blood wash away sins? It is not at the point of faith, not at the point of repentance, nor at the point of confession. The forgiving blood of Jesus washes sins away WHEN one is baptized (Acts 22:16).

Without water baptism, there’s no *contact with the blood of Christ*

(Rom. 6:3-4). Since the blood of Jesus is what washes sins away, the question is, when does one contact the blood of Christ? One contacts the blood of Christ when he/she is baptized INTO Christ (Rom. 6:3-6). It was in Christ's death that he shed His blood and it is when we die to sin and obey the likeness of His death, burial and resurrection (in water baptism) that we contact His precious blood. Romans 6:17-18 says, "Being THEN made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." One is not made free from sin when he first believes, repents or confesses faith in Christ. One is made free from sin when he is baptized according to Romans 6:18.

Without water baptism, there's no *putting off the old man of sin* (Rom. 6:6). Without discarding one's old sinful life, there is no salvation. One must "die" to the sinful life and live a new life of obedience to the Lord. This is done when one is baptized (Rom. 6:6), not when one believes, repents or confesses.

Without water baptism, there's no *being made free from sin* (Rom. 6:18). This verse is so clear one would need help to misunderstand it. Exactly WHEN is one made free from their sins? It is when one OBEYS from the heart (sincerely) that form of doctrine that has been delivered to us. What is the "form of doctrine" a sinner obeys? It is water baptism. That is the topic of discussion, the context, of Romans 6:1-18. One obeys a "likeness" of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:3-5). As Jesus died on the cross, a sinner dies to sin. As Jesus was buried in a tomb, a sinner is buried (immersed) in water baptism. As Jesus was raised up from the dead, a "new creature" (II Cor. 5:17) is raised up from the waters of baptism. When one obeys this "form of doctrine," he is then made free from sin. He is a new creature (creation) in Christ. Old things are done away. All things have become new (II Cor. 5:17).

Without water baptism, there's no *likeness of the Lord's resurrection* (Rom. 6:5). As Jesus was raised up from the tomb, one who is baptized is raised up from the waters of baptism. This cannot be said of one who believes in Jesus. This cannot be said of one who repents of his sins. This

cannot be said of one who confesses faith in Jesus. The only likeness of the Lord's resurrection is when one is raised from the watery grave of baptism.

Without water baptism, there's no *operation of God on our sins* (Col. 2:12). In water baptism, God performs an operation on us to remove our sins from our soul. One cannot remove his own sins, it is only done by God. God does not perform this operation when one believes. He does not perform it when one repents. He does not perform it when one confesses. Colossians 2:12 clearly shows God performs His operation when one is baptized in water.

Without water baptism, there's no *new birth* (John 3:5). Jesus told Nicodemus that unless one is "born again" he cannot be saved. This new birth is made up of "water" and "the spirit." The "Holy Spirit" reveals God will that one must be baptized in "water" to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Water baptism is the only action in the whole New Testament that can be connected with a birth. In a birth, a baby comes into the world from a place where he/she is covered (a place that cannot be seen). In water baptism, a person comes into the world from a place where he/she is covered (a place that cannot be seen). One is born the first time in natural child birth, but one is "born again" (born anew) through/in the process of water baptism. Faith, repentance or confession does not resemble, even remotely, the action of a birth.

Without water baptism, there's no *death to sin* (Rom. 6:2,11). Unless one dies to sin, ceases to live a life of sin, there is no forgiveness of sins. Romans 6 makes the connection of dying to sin with water baptism, not with faith, repentance or confession.

Without water baptism, there's no *salvation* (I Peter 3:21). God is saying, "read my lips," "baptism doth also now save us." How could it be said any plainer? Is God lying to us? Certainly not!

Can we say that water baptism saves us? The Bible says YES in this verse. But according to other verses, we learn that baptism alone does not save. We do not count on it for salvation. Anyone can be dunked under water. So, what then does save? God saves (Jude 1:25). Jesus saves (Heb.

7:25). Faith saves (Rom. 5:1). Repentance saves (Luke 13:3,5). Confession saves (Rom. 10:9-10). BUT, NO ONE OF THESE ALONE saves. All that we do, we do by faith. Nothing we do is any good without faith. By faith, we repent. By faith, we confess. By faith, we are baptized. So, we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). But not faith alone (James 2:24).

James 2 compliments Romans 4. Lest there be a misunderstanding of Rom. 4, James 2 clarifies it. The same example of Abraham is used in both texts. Abraham was saved by faith, BUT NOT FAITH ALONE. He was saved by Faith WHEN he obeyed (worked) what God told him to do.

The word FAITH is a figure of speech (synecdoche) by which a part is put for the whole. When the Bible says we're saved by faith, it does not mean faith alone, nothing more, nothing less. James two makes this clear. Faith is believing and trusting God. Faith is doing what God says, WHEN he says, WHY he says, and HOW he says. Active faith involves the whole plan of salvation, not just faith alone.

It's not hard to understand what Jesus said to do to be saved in Mark 16:16: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" But many deny it. Faith is not all one must do, but I'm not going to deny what Jesus said do. This passage is in perfect harmony with every passage on faith, every passage on repentance, every passage on confession, every passage in the whole New Testament.

There is no verse or verses anywhere (or context for that matter) that tells us all there is to do to be saved. Mark 16:16 doesn't. Romans 5:1 doesn't. First Corinthians 15:1-4 doesn't. Acts 17:30 doesn't. There's not one. If so, where? And, if you attempt to point one out, then you have denied the remainder of the New Testament. I'll take all the word of God, not just a part of it.

*STOP will not be forwarded
to you when you move.
Send us a change of address or
you will be deleted from our
mailing list.*

Repentance...

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Old Testament preached the necessity of repentance to people in sin. Jonah preached to the city of Nineveh, "...Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). Jesus said, "*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here*" (Matt. 12:41).

When John the baptizer came preparing the way for Christ, he preached repentance. "*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 3:1,2). Mark records, "*John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*" (Mark 1:4).

When Jesus began His personal ministry, He preached repentance. "*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 4:17). Jesus stated, "...for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13). In Matthew 11:20ff, Jesus pronounced "woes" upon Chorazin and Capernaum for refusing to repent. Jesus made it clear in Luke 13:3,5 that we must either repent or perish!

The apostle Peter preached repentance: "*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:38). "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*" (Acts 3:19).

The apostle Paul preached repentance to the idolatrous people in Athens (Acts 17:30,31). Paul told Timothy, "*In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth*" (II Tim. 2:25).

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Before one can obey the command to repent, he must understand

what is involved in Bible repentance.

The word "repent" is used in two different ways in both the Old and New Testaments and is translated from two different Hebrew words in the Old Testament and two corresponding Greek verbs in the New Testament. The two Hebrew words are *naham* and *shubh*. The two Greek verbs are *metamelomai* and *metanoeo*.

The Hebrew word *naham* does not imply sin, though sin may be involved. It means, "to lament" or "to grieve." It emphasizes strong emotions: sympathy, compassion, disappointment, hurt. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia defines this word, "...To adapt language to our understanding, God is represented as repenting when delayed penalties are at last to be inflicted, or when threatened evils have been averted by genuine reformation (Gen. 6:6; Jonah 3:10). This word is translated 'repent' about 40 times in the Old Testament, and in nearly all cases it refers to God. ... God's heart is grieved at man's iniquity, and in love He bestows His grace or in justice He terminates His mercy. It indicates the aroused emotions of God which prompt Him to a different course of dealing with the people..." (p.2558). This word is used in Genesis 6:6, "*And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*" Exodus 32:14, "*And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.*"

The Hebrew word *shubh* is used in the Old Testament to express repentance in the sense of "turn back" or "change directions." This word demands a change in attitude toward sin and toward God, and implies a personal decision to forsake sin and to enter into fellowship with God. This word is used in 1 Kings 8:47,48, "...and repent, and make supplication unto thee...saying, We have sinned...And so return unto thee with all their heart, and all their soul..." Ezekiel 14:6, "...Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." Ezekiel 18:30, "...Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

The Greek word *metamelomai* is used in the New Testament to indi-

cate emotional concern and regret. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says, "...The feeling indicated by the word may issue in genuine repentance, or it may degenerate into mere remorse..." (p. 2558). In Matthew 27:3, Judas "repented" in the sense of regret or remorse. His regret did not turn him back to God.

The Greek word *metanoeo* in the New Testament expresses the spiritual change implied in a sinner's return to God. It means to change one's mind with regard to sin, and consequently to change one's conduct. This word is used in Matthew 3:2, 4:17, Acts 2:38, 17:30 and many others. The noun form of this word is *metanoia* which is used of repentance from sin or evil. Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words points out that "...this change of mind involves both a turning FROM sin and a turning TO God" (p.281).

TWO EXAMPLES OF TRUE REPENTANCE

In the Old Testament, the **City of Nineveh** "repented at the preaching of Jonah" according to the Lord in Matthew 12:41. God had sent Jonah to Nineveh and he preached, "*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown...*" (Jonah 3:4). The people of Nineveh believed God (Jonah 3:5). They "*turned from their evil way*" (Jonah 3:10). The Lord said they repented. They turned from their evil and turned to God.

In the New Testament the **Prodigal Son** (Luke 15:11-24) is a classic example of genuine repentance. He departed from his father and went into sin. He requested his inheritance, gathered all his substance, went into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living. When his resources were gone, his "friends" were gone and he found himself in the hog pen starving. But, he "came to himself," thought about his circumstances and about his father's house and determined to go back. He recognized, acknowledged, and confessed his sins. In humility, he requested just to become a servant in his father's house. He experienced the joy of forgiveness from his father. Notice the steps involved in his turning from sin and turning to his father: 1) He gave careful consideration to his situation.

He recognized where he was and where he needed to be. 2) There was genuine sorrow for the sins he had committed. 3) There was the determination to make things right. 4) He returned to his father's house. 5) With genuine humility, he confessed his sins. He didn't slip in the back door and expect to be treated as if nothing had happened. 6) He made a fervent plea for a place in the father's house. All of these steps are involved in genuine repentance!

THE SCOPE OF REPENTANCE

The reason many have a misconception of true repentance is because they do not recognize the full scope of repentance. Many confuse repentance with things that may or may not be involved in repentance, but certainly do not constitute repentance within themselves. For example:

Repentance is NOT FEAR!

Many fear death, or the Judgment, or hell itself. But, being afraid of these things does not constitute repentance. One may live a life of sin and then in the hour of death, out of fear, call on God to save him. Fear alone is not repentance. James stated, *"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble"* (James 2:19). The devils trembled but they did not repent. Felix also trembled, *"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee"* (Acts 24:25). Felix didn't repent! Godly fear will motivate one to repent, because one who truly fears God will obey God. *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccl. 12:13). *"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him"* (Acts 10:34,35). But, godly fear within itself is not repentance.

Repentance is NOT REGRET!

One might regret sin for any number of reasons. When one is confronted with his sin, he might just regret that he got caught. Achan regretted

taking the spoils from Jericho, after he got caught (Joshua 7:1-26). When Samuel confronted Saul for his disobedience to God, he expressed regret, but did not demonstrate true repentance (I Sam. 15:10-30). Judas regretted his betrayal of Christ, but showed no true repentance. *"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself; and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders... And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself"* (Matt. 27:3,5). One should regret his sins for the right reasons; but, regret within itself is not repentance!

Repentance is NOT GODLY SORROW ALONE! Godly sorrow is certainly involved in repentance. There will be no repentance without genuine godly sorrow. *"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death"* (II Cor. 7:10). Just because one is sorry for his sins does not mean he has repented of those sins. If one is truly grieved over his sinful life, he will be motivated to repent.

Repentance is NOT TURNING FROM SIN ALONE! Repentance certainly involves quitting sin. The drunkard must quit drinking alcohol. The thief must quit stealing. The adulterer must quit committing adultery. The Christian who forsakes the assembling of the saints, must quit forsaking the assembling of the saints. But, just the quitting of these sins, and nothing more, does not constitute true repentance. Repentance involves, not only the turning from sin, but also the turning to God in obedience to His will. *"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance"* (Matt. 3:8). We must not only turn from the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21); but, we must also turn to God in adding the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23), and the Christian graces (II Peter 1:5-11). In true repentance one must quit doing what is wrong and start doing what is right.

The alien sinner in becoming a Christian must in repentance turn from a life of sin and turn to God in obedience to His word. He must confess faith in Christ as the Son of God. The Ethiopian eunuch confessed, *"I*

believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Paul wrote, *"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"* (Rom. 10:10). He must also be baptized for the remission of sins. *"...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."* (Acts 2:38; cf. Acts 22:16; 10:48; Rom. 6:1-5; Gal. 3:26,27; I Peter 3:21). The individual who fails to confess faith in Christ as the Son of God and to be baptized for the remission of sins has not yet repented of sin!

In repentance, the erring Christian must turn from sin and turn to God in compliance with His terms for forgiveness. Simon was told to, *"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee"* (Acts 8:22). *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"* (James 5:16). *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (I John 1:9). One who is not willing to confess sin and pray for forgiveness has not repented. Repentance involves making it right with the ones sinned against (Matt. 5:23,24). Private sin may be privately confessed to God. Public sin requires public confession. When a child of God sins publicly, he has wronged the church, at least those to whom it is known. Before it can be made right with God, it must be made right with the church. The confession should be as public as the sin is!

The full scope of repentance involves the thoughts, will, and actions of the penitent. It is a change of mind or will that is produced by godly sorrow and results in reformation or change of one's life or conduct. It involves honestly, fervently, and sincerely seeking the favor of God (His forgiveness) by turning from a sinful way of life and turning to God in God's appointed way, being motivated by a sincere desire and determination to do right and to be right. This determination comes from genuine godly sorrow because the sinner knows he has offended God and is under His wrath. This desire and

determination involves making restitution so far as possible.

A CHANGE OF HEART

Repentance will never take place without a change of heart. The sinner must change his attitude toward sin and toward God. The most needed characteristic of man is a **penitent heart** as demonstrated by David (Psalm 51) and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). Without a penitent heart, one will not go to heaven.

A penitent heart is a heart that aches because of sin. It is a heart that will not allow one who has committed sin to eat, sleep, or rest until forgiveness is obtained. Before Saul was baptized, “...he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink” (Acts 9:9). One who is indifferent toward sin in his life does not have a penitent heart.

A penitent heart is an examining heart. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves...” (II Cor. 13:5). The Prodigal Son examined himself in the hog pen. How long has it been since you have searched your heart and asked: Am I right with God? Is there sin in my life that I need to repent of?

A penitent heart is a confessing heart. The Prodigal Son confessed to his father, “I have sinned against heaven, and before thee” (Luke 15:21). The penitent heart impels one to daily confess sin to the Father in heaven and desire forgiveness. One who does not confess his sin does not have a penitent heart.

A penitent heart is a humble heart. When one commits sin he ought to hang his head in shame and humility and say as the prodigal son, “make me as one of thy hired servants” (Luke 15:19). Too often people are boastful and proud of sin in their life. They joke and laugh about it. The penitent heart demonstrates an attitude of humility.

A penitent heart is a forsaking heart. It is a heart that forsakes sin. One may fall in sin but a penitent heart will not allow him to stay in sin. If one is reluctant to quit some sin, he does not have a penitent heart.

A penitent heart is a correcting heart. It impels one to correct wrong doing as soon as possible and

to whatever extent possible. Too many don't want to do what is necessary to correct their sin. They do not have a penitent heart.

CONCLUSION

God not only demands, but lovingly desires that all come to Him in repentance. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). Our God is a God of love who wants to see every sinner saved. “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 2:4).

Heaven rejoices when sinners repent. Sin brings grief to God. “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God...” (Eph. 4:30). Therefore, great rejoicing comes to heaven when one sinner repents. “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. ... Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:7,10).

God gives man the ability to repent. All who really want to repent can do so and come to God. God gave us the power and ability to choose (Matt. 11:28-30; II Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30). Man can go so deep and so long in sin that he loses the desire to repent (Heb. 6:4-6). The most tragic thing anyone could do is allow themselves to go so far in sin that they loose the desire to repent!

God gives man time and opportunity to repent (II Peter 3:9). But, many will wait too late. “And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” (Rev. 2:21). If you need to repent, don't wait until it is too late and be lost forever!

God through his word encourages all to come to Him in repentance with two great incentives: 1) The goodness of God. “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). 2) The severity of God. “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of

God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou shalt be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

God does not force the sinner to repent. He makes an appeal through the preaching of His word. He seeks to motivate all to repentance through His goodness and severity. Each individual must choose to repent or perish (Luke 13:3,5).

WHAT WILL YOUR CHOICE BE?

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"...GO AND TELL HIM HIS FAULT BETWEEN YOU AND HIM ALONE"

Jimmie B. Hill

Our love for one another can only be shown in the actions that such love prompts. With this in mind, our Lord tells us how we are to treat those who would sin against us.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. 18:15).

The word "brother" is a term of endearment which was instituted by our Lord and Saviour. It is not to be taken lightly. Christians are called brethren because they are of the one redeemed family with Jehovah God as their Father and Christ as their Brother. Therefore, as the Father and the Son are one (John 17:21), Christians are to be united in doctrine, priorities, and helping one another to their eternal destiny.

Our Lord did not choose the word brother arbitrarily. This word carries with it the love (*agape*) of one another (I John 4:7-11,16). As members of the same family, each is to be concerned with the others' physical and spiritual welfare (Rom. 15:2) and work with each other in the caring of one another (Rom. 13:8-10). Love seeks opportunity to do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). Our love for one another can only be shown in the actions that such love prompts. With this in mind, our Lord tells us how we are to treat those who would sin against us.

Matthew 18:15 tells us how to deal with brethren who sin against us personally or in a private manner. This is apparent in the phrase, "...if thy brother shall trespass against thee." If a brother sins and injures another's character, his person, his property, or his spirit, whether by words or conduct, the situation must be dealt with. The brother who is trespassed (sinned) against is under

obligation to go and try to resolve the matter and restore the erring brother (Gal. 6:1). How is this to be done? As Matthew 18:15 indicates, he is to go to the erring brother and tell him of his fault (sin). This is to be done in the absence of any other person and without speaking to anyone. It is to be done privately. He should be told his fault in the spirit of gentleness and love. This is for his soul's sake in order that he may have the opportunity to acknowledge his offense and offer an explanation of his conduct. Many would be glad for such an opportunity and welcome the show of love and concern that brethren are to have for each other. It may be that he does not realize what he has done or the ramifications thereof and will gladly adjust his conduct and repent of his wrong doing. It is the obligation of brethren to furnish such an opportunity to one another. In the event of a personal or private trespass, such is required to be done "alone." And, if the erring brother repents (Luke 17:3,4) then the case should be settled and should never be made known to anyone else.

To violate the words of our Lord in Matthew 18:15 has the potential to do great harm to the church of our Lord. The faults of the penitent brother should not be blazoned abroad. Why? It will do no good! It may, however, cause great harm by wounding the body of Christ. The enemies of the cross relish opportunities to maliciously spread the faults of the members of the church to instill doubt about its purity in others and thereby bring about disbelief. This cripples the work of the church in the saving of souls. Also, those brethren whom once had regard for

the penitent brother, knowing of his past faults, may look at him in a different light. He may lose his reputation as a capable servant of the Lord thus making him ineffective in the work of the church. The shame involved with others knowing the nature of his sin may injure the penitent brother and cause him to suffer needlessly. He may feel unworthy to take part in the work of the church or any of its activities. By placing yourself in his situation you should fully appreciate the Lord's wisdom in one going to him "alone." The "Golden Rule" of Matthew 7:12 should be considered and heeded.

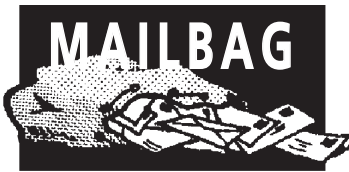
If the erring brother has the right attitude and a good heart, then he will hear the loving brother and be thankful for his diligence. And so, the Lord said, "If he hears you, you have gained your brother." By going to him alone the desired effect has been achieved. The erring brother has been preserved and the two have been reconciled. He has been gained as a Christian brother and restored to himself and to the body of Christ.

Brethren, the wisdom of our Lord can be seen in His words, "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*"

Brethren, sin is sin. But any sin for which repentance is made will be forgiven by our merciful and gracious God. Can we do any less?

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Please send us your change of address when you move.



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

A couple of months ago an appeal was made on behalf of Linda Hoff to help with medical bills she incurred because of having cancer but no health insurance. Because of the generosity of fellow Christians the bills were paid off. Funds received after that point are being returned (cf. Exodus 36:4-7). Linda recently had a blood test that showed no evidence of cancer after only one chemotherapy treatment. Your love and concern has greatly touched us" **...Douglas Hoff, Rockwood, MI.** "Dear brothers in Christ: This letter is on behalf of **Mark Brewer**, a graduate of the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies. Mark is serving as the pulpit minister for the Des Arc church of Christ. Mark took on this mission work two years ago under the oversight of the Judsonia church of Christ. During this time there have been 24 baptisms and numerous Bible studies. The Lord's church in Des Arc has grown 500%. Mark is 36 years old and is engaged to be married and as of a month ago, his future was bright. Mark had surgery on his gall bladder recently and the doctors discovered a problem. Mark is in desperate need of a liver transplant, without it he will die. The elders at the Judsonia church have set up a fund to pay for Mark's medical expenses. The cost of the medical expenses, including the transplant is approximately \$350,000. If there is any way you can help, please do. We ask not only for your financial support, but also for the prayers of faithful brethren. Please help us spread the news of Mark to others. If you have any questions, please contact any one of the elders: Dean Curtis (501) 729-3556, Paul Farley (501) 729-5118, Donald Loy (501) 729-0402. Make checks payable to Judsonia church of Christ and specify the money be placed in the Mark Brewer medical fund. Send to **Judsonia church of Christ, PO Box 422, Judsonia, AR.**" [EDITOR'S NOTE: I've met Mark and know that he is a faithful preacher of the Gospel and worthy of our support. On his behalf, I ask for your help. — Garland] "Thank you very much for STOP" **...Ron Shandor, Death Valley, CA.** "Please put me on your mailing list for STOP. Thank you" **...Marguerito Miller, Payson, AZ.** "I enjoy STOP so much and look forward to each publication. Keep spreading the Word! Hope this contribution will help a little with your mailing expenses" **...Roy Ingram, Crane, MO.** "I received two copies from one of the elders of our congregation and would like to be added to your mailing list" **...Al Corley, Barnesville, GA.** "I really enjoy receiving this conservative faith builder in today's 'liberal church.' Please keep up the great work. If you have any back issues of STOP, I am planning on collecting them from now on. I have shared some with other believers and wish everyone who calls himself a member of the church would read your monthly letter along with a daily diet of the Word. Thank you" **...Larry Gouch, Bartlett, TN.** "Truthfully, I must say that I take no 'joy' in reading STOP when it comes to reports such as the article about Abilene 'Christian' University compromising truth about homosexuality and other such compromises in the Lord's church. I've always attempted to be 'open-minded' enough to try to understand the positions of others, even when I disagree with them. However, God's Word clearly teaches that homosexual activity is an 'abomination.' It's beyond me how ACU can make such compromises. While we take no joy in reading of such things, we do need to be informed, especially when it comes to such an extreme compromise as this, and we need to pray earnestly for any who have wandered away from the truth. No Christian needs to 'delight' in reading such news as if it were the latest 'gossip.' I hope that your readers read these reports with prayerful attitudes. Please add us to your mailing list" **...Stan & Lisa Cook, Gadsden, AL.** "We enjoy reading STOP and would like to be added to your mailing list. Thanks!" **...Brandon and Leah Coats, Savannah, GA.** "Thank you for STOP for a lot of years. There were good messages in it. I can't read much anymore so please don't send it any more. Keep up the good work" **...Edith Rich, Red Boiling Springs, TN.** "Copies of the updated 8th edition of "The Other Side of Evolution," by Jon Gary Williams, are now available for free distribution. This book is written for the average reader. In it the complexities involved in the evolution theory are made simple so both parents and young people can benefit from it. It is also suitable for classroom studies. Individuals and congregations can order copies (as many as needed) of "The Other Side of Evolution" from **Randall Standefer, PO Box 123, Dunlap, TN 37327, rstandefer@bledsoe.net.** "Keep up the good work" **...Arkansas City, KS.** "Thanks for the great paper. STOP is truly a very encouraging newsletter. Thank you" **...Ron Shandor, Death Valley, CA.** "Greetings, I appreciate the broadcast

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Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East End Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed **FREE** upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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