

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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AS MANY AS I LOVE...REPENT!

It is not uncommon when the gospel is preached to unbelievers that they are told they must repent of their sins in order to be saved. However, if this were true, which I contend it is not, then salvation would be based on a work that the unbeliever must perform in order to receive the life of Christ. How can one who is lost in sin change his mind about sin in his life unless the grace of God moves upon his heart and gives him the faith to believe? Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. But what must one hear according to the word of God? Another, that is, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did all the work necessary by dying on the cross for the sin of the world in order to save all mankind. He alone did the one righteous act necessary to conquer sin and death, and all one must do is to believe in Him and the work that He did. Believe, have faith!

**But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"
And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul
and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."
(Acts 16.28-31 NASB)**

Surely, repentance can be and often is part of the initial salvation experience, but it is not what saves a person. Repentance has more to do with moving into the realm of sanctification and is vital for all who are seeking to conquer and to be counted worthy of the kingdom and glory in the oncoming eon.

A conqueror through the life of Christ is one who is humble and knows repentance in his or her own life. Repentance is often viewed as something negative and as something that relates to the unbeliever. However, if we truly understand what repentance is, we will see that it is something very positive, and it is for those who believe. In fact, repentance is essential to us once we are saved, for it is instrumental in our spiritual growth and our entrance into the coming kingdom of Christ.

What does repentance mean? In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word is *nacham*, which comes from another word meaning "to sigh or breathe strongly; by implication, to be sorry, that is, in a favorable sense to pity, console or in an unfavorable sense to avenge oneself." The first mention of this word is in relation to God.

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. (Genesis 6.6 KJV)

In other words, man had become so wicked that the Lord grieved or was sorrowful over having made man. The Lord surely gave out a deep sigh when He saw the condition of fallen man. But, He found Noah, a just man, perfect in his generation (Genesis 6.9).

So in the very beginning, God laid down the principle of repentance. Sighing or breathing deeply has the sense of regret over a particular course of action or thought which leads to change of action or thought. On God's part, all His actions and thoughts are righteous, holy, and just. On our part, it is the opposite. In our old nature, the old man, our actions and thoughts are unrighteous. When we are called to repent, we are called to turn from our old ways, from our thoughts and actions, which come from our fallen nature.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for *repent* is *metanoeo*, which comes from another word meaning “to think differently or to reconsider.” The word for *repentance* is *metanoia*, which means “reversal of decision.” Thus, *to repent* means that we make a change, we go in an opposite direction from where we currently are. Paul gives a clear example of repentance in his letter to the Corinthians.

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Corinthians 7.9-10 NKJ)

Here we discover “they sighed or breathed strongly” when they were made sorry. When we are sorry, don’t we sigh in grief? Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation. We are saved by grace through faith; however, repentance always follows once our eyes are opened to see the Lord Jesus and His finished work. Repentance is part of being saved (1 Corinthians 1.18).

Actually, repentance does not truly begin until we are saved by grace, and it continues throughout our walk with the Lord. We need the eyes of our hearts opened to see our true condition and the many things in our lives that are in opposition to God’s righteous will. Simply, there are many things in our lives about which we must change our minds, especially if we desire or seek to reign with Christ in His coming kingdom.

This kind of repentance causes us to change our mind from the things of the world, the flesh, and the devil and turn to the Lord and His coming kingdom. True repentance leads us from the things of this world system, the temporal things, to that which is celestial (heavenly) and eonian (life in the coming eons). This is the purpose of repentance in the lives of believers. This is good and essential for our spiritual growth!

If you still do not believe that repentance is a word for the Lord’s people, then consider the Lord’s words to the seven ecclesias of Revelation 2-3. Six times (to five of the ecclesias) our Lord exhorts His people to repent. He is not calling for unbelievers to repent, to change their minds; He is calling the ecclesia of God to change their minds in regard to that which is unrighteous and not of His character.

He does not call for repentance out of anger but out of love for His people. He desires that they turn around, turn from that which hinders His life in their midst and turn to see Him, the very love of their life. Judgment begins with the house of God (1 Peter 4.17), and He is passing judgment on His house. How can He judge the nations and the kingdoms of the world without first judging His own possession, called out from among the nations? He must judge!

Dear brethren, there are many interpretations of Revelation 2-3, but there is one thing that is irrefutable, and that is the heart cry of our beloved Lord for His body of believers.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” (Revelation 3.19 NASB)

He rebukes, chastens, and disciplines with one purpose in view; that all might be placed as sons in His kingdom in the oncoming eon (age). Why? Because He loves us and He wants us to sit upon His throne as glorified sons of the kingdom when He takes the scepter of the kingdom over this earth.

“For whom [the] LORD loves He disciplines, and He scourges [fig., punishes] every son whom He receives.” [Prov 3:11, 12] (Hebrews 12.6 ALT)

Let us submit to His love and repent of whatever the spirit of God reveals to our hearts. Let us turn and truly see the love of our life! Let us seek to be in His presence and behold Him face to face.