

DISCIPLESHIP DIGEST

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"LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE . . . TO FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS" (I Peter 2:21 NAS)

Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day: And that REPENTANCE and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lu. 24:46 - 47).

The word **repentance** is not a generally popular word. But it is the central theme of salvation message. It is one of the greatest topics of the Bible, and the focus of it.

The message of **repentance** runs throughout the entire Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, it is **repentance**! This is the basis for man's relationship with God since the fall. He commands it.

God demands **repentance** from man as a condition for re-union with Him after the great revolt in the garden of Eden. Infact, God's only requirement for restoring man to his lost glory and honour is **repentance**. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God..... Rom 3²³".

Divine justice demands that every disobedience must be punished. Therefore, without **repentance** and a saviour, man is lost; for no flesh can endure the wrath of divine justice.

But what saith the Scriptures?

"There is none righteous, no not one:

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known:

There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. 3:10-18)

ALL WE LIKE SHEEP HAVE GONE ASTRAY; WE HAVE TURNED EVERY ONE TO HIS OWN WAY; AND THE LORD HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL" (Isa 53⁶)

The Kingdom of God is here with us already, but the door

to that glorious Kingdom promised in the scriptures is **repentance**. John the Baptist said " Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3²). The Lord Jesus Christ began his earthly testimony with "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Mt. 4¹⁷).

And at Pentecost, the apostle Peter opened the Church's first address to the world, after the resurrection and glorification of the Lord Christ, with "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the lord our God shall call." Act. 2:38-39.

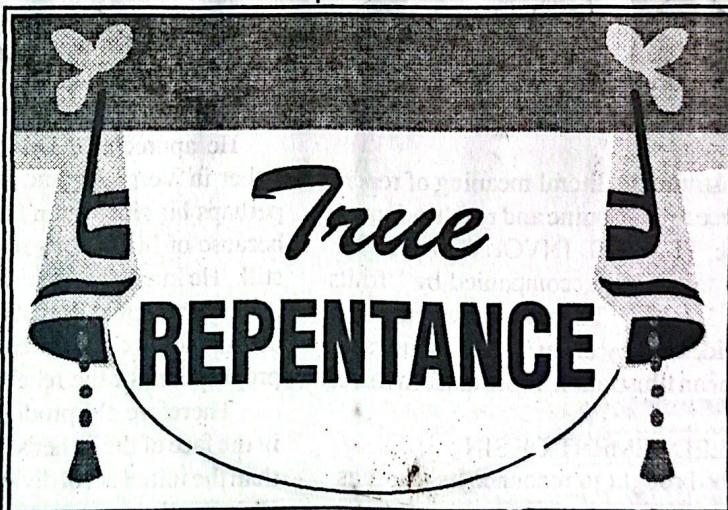
According to the apostle Paul, the first principle of the doctrine of Christ is "Repentance from dead works; and of faith toward God. (Heb.6:1)

Therefore, the cornerstone of Discipleship is "Repentance from dead works", and it is the first step towards a man's re-union with God.

Now! WHAT IS TRUE REPENTANCE?

We have said that the first principle of Discipleship is Obedience/ change of allegiance. You cannot be called a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ without being "Born Again". Divine Law forbids it. (Rom. 7:1-6). There has to be a turning point; a personal encounter with the Saviour. There must be a renunciation of former rebellion and a forsaking of all known paths of disobedience. Death to the former husband must be confirmed and celebrated. A would-be disciple of Jesus must realise his utter unworthiness (Lu. 5⁸); and he must be willing to surrender all to Christ (Lu. 5¹¹). Thus, **repentance** is the first step to enrolling in the Discipleship program of Christ.

Before commencing His earthly ministry, our Lord Jesus Christ, Went for John the Baptist's "Sinners Baptism or 'baptism of **repentance** (Lu. 3³) at river Jordan, not because he had any sin to confess or renounce (1 Pet. 2:22), but as He put it. "to fulfil all righteousness" - that is to say, "all God's righteous demands that the human race must renounce SELF (the iniquity of us all), that evil nature that entered Adam at the





Inno-Praise

fall, renounce Satan; and renounce the world, as a condition for restoration.

JESUS therefore, "made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death. (Phil. 2:7,8)

By doing this, Jesus himself was laying a foundation for all Adam's race to follow. He confirmed John the Baptist's testimony, and demonstrated that the first true step towards God is for every person, man or woman, big or small, young or old, rich or poor; to "renounce, repudiate, lose sight of and forget," or say no," or "give up all right" to his/her sinful human nature inherited from Adam. And to die to this world system, which the scriptures said "lieth in the evil one: 1 Jn. 5:19."

This in brief is true repentance:-

- To give up all rights/claims to SELF;
- to renounce ones former rebellion;
- to have a change of heart towards God and His interests;
- to re-consider ones thoughts and attitudes;
- to make a complete turn around;
- to acknowledge ones utter unworthiness before a Holy God;
- to feel pain or sorrow on account of something done or left undone especially for sin committed (Webster).

These and more constitute the literal meaning of repentance. But for a repentance to be genuine and result-oriented, it must go beyond these. IT MUST INVOLVE ACTION. There must be a public testimony accompanied by "fruits meet for repentance Lu. 3:7-17." There must be loathsome attitude towards sin, evidenced by all as/and demonstrated through the baptisms. For an illustration, repentance involves the following:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SIN

(The conscience must be brought to renounce its leanings)

INSTANTLY FOLLOWED BY CONFESSION OF SIN

(The soul must despair of its disease/sickness)

FORSAKEN OF THE SIN

(The mind must despise its attitude towards God)

VOLUNTARILY TURNING AWAY FROM THE SIN AND WHOLE-HEARTED SURRENDER TO THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST

(The natural man must be put to shame)

However, the most practical illustration of repentance is the story of the "prodigal son" told by the Lord himself to emphasise this topic. Lu. 15:11-24. Study it carefully.

Of particular note here, shall be verses 18 and 21; where we could clearly discern that "Divine mercy" does not exclude contrition (sorrow for sin). And this is where many err! They plan to repent; they feel sorry for their sins

and convince themselves that they needed to repent and indeed are willing to do so. But they soon hear about the mercy of God; His goodness and unmerited favour toward a soul; and His benevolence to the poor and humble. THEN, THEY MISTAKE THIS AS BEING UNIVERSAL. They become careless and assume that "Divine justice" will fail on account of remorse. They assume that their wounded pride and self-will are enough price to merit unconditional pardon. They rest, because through vain imaginations, they have grieved the Holy spirit who was quickening their conscience to its lost and pathetic state, so He leaves them alone - to their self-delusion. And because they appear to have a false peace of mind, they drag on and begin to make amends. They get into religion and learn some religious language and practices and soon forget that they are in dire need of repentance. These deceive themselves: for if divine hammer should strike at any moment, they will soon go down to the pit as fast and as heavy as the adulterer or the fornicator or the liar or the public infidel they know. They are most deceived!

But look at "the prodigal son."

"When he came to himself, he said, ... I perish; I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ... AND HE AROSE, AND CAME TO HIS FATHER." (Lu. 15¹⁷⁻²⁰) ACTION! "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him". verse 20. OH THE DEPTH OF FATHERHOOD!

"AND THE SON SAID UNTO HIM, FATHER, I HAVE SINNED against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." verse 21. (TRUE REPENTANCE).

He appreciated Divine Mercy as demonstrated by his father in Verse 20; and rather than take it for granted that perhaps his sins weren't as serious as he thought then to be, because of his father's reaction; he confessed his rebellion-still. He knew that deep as Divine compassion runs, Divine justice also demands that every transgression of the Law must be punished, except where there is proven repentance and propitiation for the rebel.

Therefore, the prodigal son's deep cry of repentance even in the face of the father's compassion, did much more for him than the initial act of divine mercy demonstrated by his father. He instantly became promoted "heir apparent to the throne of his father," which the ring symbolises, besides the other meaning of acceptance. verse 22.

So we establish that Divine pardon rests squarely upon divine mercy, whereas divine promotion depends on grace appreciated as well as repentance shown in the midst of compassion.

As a dear brother put it: "The man realised his condition. He realised that he has gone very far away from the father, the source from whom all blessings flow. He realised that he had wasted all his life. He realised that all opportunities that the father gave to him have been abused and misused. He realised he had made a wrong investment of his life." So he cried "am no more worthy to be called thy son". But his resolve for a positive change; and change towards the source was a wise decision. A decision to go back to the father for restoration is always one taken in the right direction. "True repentance

TEST YOURSELF

1. What do you understand by the term True Repentance?
2. From our analysis, have you experienced true repentance?
3. Why do you think the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh went for John the Baptist "baptising of repentance"?
4. What is the first condition for enrolling in the Discipleship program of Christ?
5. What is God's primary requirement for restoring man back to glory and honour?
6. What did the Bible say in Ac. 17:29-31?
7. What are the other foundational doctrines of Christ besides repentance? (Heb. 6:1-2)
8. Draw an illustrated diagram of the steps leading to true repentance.
9. What 3 major lessons did you learn from the story of the prodigal son?
10. What does the "ring" here symbolise?
11. The prodigal son and his father, whom did you appreciate his action most?
12. What is the difference between divine pardon and divine promotion?
13. Is there anybody you know, who needs repentance? What will you do about him or her now?
14. Why do you need repentance?
15. Do you believe about Heaven and Hell? To which of these two is your life currently heading to?
16. I need a place to cry out! What about you? (Rom. 10:8-13).

Scriptures for Further Reading:

Isa 53:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; I Jn 1:6-10; 2:1-6; 5:9-12; Jude 5-7,14-15; Rev. 2:5,16-17; 3:2-3; Gal 3:11-14; Matt. 22:29; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph 2:8-9; Matt 16:24; Lu 14:25-33; Heb. 13:8-9.

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must always, as a rule be backed with a firm decision. So it was for the prodigal son! You too need repentance. You need repentance because God has not promised any sinner tomorrow. "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. 10:31).

Therefore, you need repentance urgently. You need to repent because there is no repentance in the grave. "And God is angry with the wicked everyday. Also, "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." (Ps 7¹¹; 9¹⁷).

You must repent because "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb 9:27, 28)

God commands you to repent because He has appointed a day of judgement. A day in which God will not pity you. He said. "I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them." Ezk. 8:18; Ac. 17:29-31).

For those of you who take refuge in religion, God's warning is: a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. For if righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain." God forbid! (Gal.2:16, 21) "Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest." Rom 2:14.

And you who like Simon the Sorcerer (Ac. 8:13-23) are lost in the Church, even in the midst of the pentecostals fanfare, have you never read that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." (Rom 1:18, 25; 2:9)?

Have you forgotten what the Scriptures said? "Expel the immoral brother; have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of the darkness."

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Rom. 2:14).

"It is true that judgement against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld, but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath.

The bow of God's wrath is bent and the arrow made ready

on the string. Justice directs the bow to your heart, and strains at the bow.

It is to be ascribed to nothing else that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world after you closed your eyes to sleep.; there is no other reason to be given why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given, while you have been reading this article, but His Mercy; yea, no other reason can be given why you do not this very moment drop down into hell. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict, to the end that He might show what the wrath of Jehovah is. God hath had it on His heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent His love is, and also how terrible His wrath is.

Now, God stands ready to pity you. This is the day of mercy. You may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is passed, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain." (Jonathan Edwards).

Therefore, "let the wicked forsake his way; and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa 55:7) For "God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Now I pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor. 5:19-20)

And "that if thou shall confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10:9.

Shouldn't you bow down your head now, and ask God to wash away your sins with the blood of His son, Jesus Christ; accept His death on the Calvary cross as in your stead, and invite the risen Saviour to come and make His dwelling in your heart? O sinner, consider the fearful danger you are in. PLEASE REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.

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