

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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A Repentant Heart

Romans 2:5: *But according to your hardness and unrepentant heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;*

The Holy Spirit through Paul condemns an “*unrepentant*” (or “*impenitent*”) heart. To be right with God, we must instead have a *repentant* heart.

The need for a repentant heart is rooted in the necessity and nature of *repentance*. In **Acts 2:37**, guilt-filled Jews asked the apostles what they needed to do to be right with God. In **verse 38**, the Holy Spirit through Peter commanded them, “*Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*”

Notice that scriptural baptism is necessary for one outside the body of Christ to have his or her sins forgiven. Notice also, though, that *repentance* is necessary for one to have his or her sins forgiven.

Though much of the religious world denies what God teaches about *baptism*, when one chooses to accept the truth, obeying this command is fairly simple.

Repentance, on the other hand, can be much more difficult.

For one who has lived in an adulterous marriage for forty years, repentance involves leaving that adulterous relationship (cf. **Matt. 19:9**). For one who

has spent his entire adult life owning and operating a liquor store, repentance involves choosing a new career. These examples illustrate the depth of the commitment that's involved in the word, “*repent.*” One will not be in obedience to this command without a repentant heart.

While **Acts 2:38** contains commands for those outside the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit also taught that repentance is necessary for the *erring Christian* to receive forgiveness of sin.

In **Acts 8:13**, a man named Simon was baptized into Christ. At that point, his *past* sins were forgiven. He sinned, though, *after becoming a Christian (verses 18-21)*, and was commanded in **verse 22**, “*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee.*”

Notice that the erring Christian is given two distinct commands in this verse. If an erring Christian prays for God's forgiveness but is not *repentant*, he or she is not promised forgiveness.

Likewise, if an erring Christian is *sorry* to have sinned but is not repentant, he or she is not promised forgiveness. Notice **2 Corinthians 7:10**: *For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, which brings no regret. But the sorrow of the world produces death.*

Verse 11 goes on to say: *For behold, this same thing, that you were grieved in a godly way, what earnest care it worked in you. Yes, what defense, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and vengeance! In*

everything you demonstrated yourselves to be pure in the matter.

Godly sorrow is that sorrow which leads to godly *correction*. It leads to a *change of will*, as one zealously turns in the opposite direction of sin and endeavors to do the best he or she can to not commit that sin again. This is what repentance is all about.

Understanding this helps us understand the nature of a repentant heart.

A repentant heart is one that recognizes the *seriousness* of sin. One with a repentant heart will not minimize sin's severity, but will be deeply moved by the fact that he or she has grossly mistreated God (cf. **Matt. 26:75**; **2 Sam. 12:13**).

When one with a repentant heart has sin in his or her life, he or she will be *thankful* to find out so *correction* can be made.

Contrast this with the attitude alluded to in **Galatians 4:16**: *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*

Those with repentant hearts do not "attack the messenger" when sin is pointed out. Instead, those with repentant hearts have a hunger and thirst for being right with God, and thus accept correction that accords with God's Word.

Those with repentant hearts are *humble* enough to make correction, instead of being too proud to admit guilt.

Moreover, those with repentant hearts meekly accept direction from God.

James 1:21 commands, "*receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls.*" If we have repentant hearts, we will allow God's Word to mold us like clay, instead of rebelling against His commands in self-will.

One who has a repentant heart loves

God with the totality of his or her being (**Mark 12:30**), and thus chooses to deny his or her desires as needed to submit to the will of God (cf. **1 John 5:3**).

One with a repentant heart loves God so much that nothing is more important to him or her than pleasing God. When forced to choose between God's will and popularity, possessions, or comforts, one with a repentant heart will choose to obey God.

One with a repentant heart does not look for excuses to defend his or her disobedience. He or she does not use circumstances or the actions of others to justify failure to please God.

The attitude of the repentant heart is "God said it. That settles it." One with such a heart *values* pleasing God above all and thus feels a great *need* to make any change he or she finds is in accordance with God's revealed will.

Since "*all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God*" (**Rom. 3:23**), all of us must choose at times how to deal with sin we have committed. We must submit to God's terms for forgiveness.

Whether one is not yet a New Testament Christian or one is an erring Christian, part of what God requires to be forgiven of sin is *repentance*.

We must thus have a heart that is always ready to make any correction God requires of us. We must have a heart that wants to do right no matter how difficult it may be.

May each of us develop such a heart instead of being among those condemned by God for having hearts that *don't* produce needed repentance.

- Michael Hickox

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