

**REPENTANCE
TOWARD GOD
OR
AWAY FROM GOD?**

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The word that expresses the biblical concept of 'repentance' is *sub*. It is used over a thousand times in the Old Testament. It can indicate a ***turning from evil to God or a turning from God back to evil***. In Ezekiel 33:18-19 we see the description of both: ¹⁸ *If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it.* ¹⁹ *And if a wicked man turns away from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so.* (NIV)

Jesus is the righteousness we need, the wisdom we need, the redemption we need. In fact He is everything we will ever need (1 Cor. 1:29-30).

The danger in the early church, as well as today was that individuals were turning away from Jesus to the law for righteousness (Gal. 2:21), returning to another sacrifice for sin

(Heb. 10:4), and to another priesthood for help (Heb. 7:11). In so doing, the Apostle Paul declares repeatedly and boldly: ²*Listen to me, for this is serious: if you are counting on circumcision and keeping the Jewish laws to make you right with God, then **Christ cannot save you.*** ³*I'll say it again. Anyone trying to find favor with God by being circumcised must always obey every other Jewish law or perish.* ⁴**Christ is useless to you** if you are counting on clearing your debt to God by keeping those laws; you are lost from God's grace." (Gal.5:2-4; The Living Bible).

In 'repentance' someone always turns FROM something, TO something. On the positive side, it turned the Thessalonian believers FROM idols TO serve the true and living God (1 Thess. 1:9). On the negative side the writer of the Book of Hebrews warned of turning

away from Christ and back to sin (Heb. 3:12-14), away from Christ and back to the law for their justification (Heb. 10:1, 14), and away from Christ and back to the Old Testament priesthood (Heb. 7:11). The same kind of warnings are given repeatedly throughout the book of Galatians and most of the New Testament. I am surprised that most people have never seen it!

A friend of mine who is a teacher in the 'grace movement' says that (based on Hebrews 6:4-6) he believes that a believer can turn from Christ and His sacrifice, but it is so rare that it would be almost impossible to ever happen.

What my friend doesn't realize is that this same warning is all over the New Testament and the New Testament writers also include themselves in the warning that they give. The

personal pronoun **'we'** meaning 'a group of people that includes the speaker is used repeatedly throughout the New Testament.

Example: *"How shall **we** escape, if **we** neglect so great salvation"* (Heb. 2:3).

*"But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are **we**, if **we** hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end"* (Heb. 3:6).

*"For **we** are made partakers of Christ, if **we** hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end"* (Heb. 3:14)

*"For if **we** sin wilfully after that **we** have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins"* (Heb. 10:26).

*“For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not **we** escape, if **we** turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb. 12:25).*

If **we** again turn towards sin, **we** begin a process of turning away from Christ and His sacrifice. If continued in, it can lead one to departure from the Living God.

¹² **Take heed, brethren,** lest there be **in any of you** an evil heart of unbelief, **in departing from the living God.** ¹³ But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be **hardened through** the deceitfulness of **sin.** ¹⁴ For **we are made partakers of Christ, if we** hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb. 3:12-14).

The warning of the New Testament is: Beware of sin, that leads to hardness of heart, then to unbelief, and to departure from the Living God.

Someone may protest: “But I believe in *eternal redemption* (Heb. 9:12). So do I. The redemption (sacrifice) is eternal but it appears that man may turn away from it. That is what the whole book of Galatians and Hebrews is all about and many other New Testament books as well. Let the ‘Word’ change your theology instead of your theology always trying to change the Word. Amen or Oh, me!

‘Repentance’ should be towards God (See Acts 20:21), but sometimes it appears that people change their mind and turn back:

¹⁹*Dear brothers, **if anyone** has slipped away from God and no longer trusts the Lord and*

someone helps him understand the Truth again, ²⁰that person who brings him back to God will have saved a wandering soul from death, bringing about the forgiveness of his many sins.” (James 5:19-20, The Living Bible)

*²⁰ And anyone who has escaped the pollution of the world once by coming to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and who then allows himself to be entangled by it a second time and mastered, will end up in **a worse state than he began in.**”* (2 Peter 2:20, Jerusalem Bible).

“ ... And have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they then commit apostasy ...” (Heb. 6:4-6, RSV). **‘Apostasy’** is the renunciation or abandonment of a former loyalty to Christ.

Let me repeat this again: When a person turns towards sin he begins a process of turning away from Christ and His sacrifice (Heb. 10:26), if continued in it will lead to a hardening of the heart, unbelief and departure from the Living God (Heb. 3:12-14; Jas. 5:19-20; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

These same warnings are repeated continually throughout the New Testament. I am surprised that so many professing Christians have never seen these passages or acknowledged them. I think it may be the result of following men, the result of not having an honest and open heart to all the Scriptures and the hardening effects of the lifestyles of a twenty-century church. Nevertheless, the warnings are there and anyone may freely read them if they so desire. The Bible both Old and New Testaments are full of these kinds of warnings.

It is a shame that repentance towards God has been linked with legalism, the keeping of God's commandments with works of the law, or the confession of sin as being sin consciousness (Acts 3:19; Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn.1:9; Acts 8:22).

The other side of the coin is: ³⁹ *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day*" (Jn. 6:39). It is not the will of the Father that any who come to Jesus should be lost, neither is it His will that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). But the freedom of men to act and their responsibility cannot be overlooked.

Jesus said, ²⁸ *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.* ²⁹ *My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and*

no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand” (Jn. 10:28-29).

We must not overlook verse 27 which is an integral part of this context. Jesus said, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”* The condition of the Saviors promise is that the sheep listen to His voice and follow. The person who does not follow has no right to this promised eternal life. This is an essential truth affirmed many times in the New Testament. It is easy to say, *“We are the elect!”* but the Scripture admonishes us to: ¹⁰*“Set your minds, on endorsing by your conduct the fact that God has called and chosen you. If you go along these lines there is no reason why you should stumble. ¹¹ Indeed if you live this sort of life a rich welcome awaits you as you enter the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 1:10-11, Phillips

Translation). (See also Acts 26:20; Rom. 2:7-9; 2 Pet. 3:10-11).

Is it not time to stop trying to force the plain explicit warnings of Scripture to an incomplete comprehension of supposed doctrines and proof passages which the early church knew nothing of? Is it not time to begin to preach and heed the many warnings of our Savior and His Apostles? Men's lives are at stake. Is it not time to quit trying to explain them away by erroneous interpretations that have nothing to do with the passage or its context? Shall we continue to tickle people's ears cause there's money to be raised? Shall we continue to avoid the urgent warnings which Paul and so many others faithfully sounded?

“Therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things, beware lest ye also, being led away

with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Peter 3:17).

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