



Module : The Foundation Doctrines of Christ

Session 6 : Repentance - Part 5

Focus : Command to Repent with Zeal in the Space and Place of Repentance,
Resulting in Rulership

GOD'S DESIRE IS FOR ALL MEN TO REPENT IN A TIME OF ENLIGHTENMENT OR TRUTH

On Mars Hill, the Apostle Paul confronted the Athenians and their idolatrous worship. His intention was to declare and introduce them to God, a God who can be known intimately through personal relationship.

Acts 17: 22-23 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that **you are very religious in all respects**. For while I was passing through and examining the **objects of your worship**, I also found an altar with this inscription, **‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’** Therefore what you **worship in ignorance**, this I **proclaim to you**.

Paul proceeded to explain to them the spiritual illegitimacy and irrelevance of their worship of hand-made images in their quest to serve God acceptably.

Acts 17: 24-29 The **God who made the world and all things in it**, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, **does not dwell in temples** made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, **if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist**, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

Paul then informs them that while they may have embarked on their idolatrous form for serving God out of IGNORANCE, for not knowing any other way, but NOW, God requires of them to REPENT of this. The repentance is required because TRUTH and LIGHT has come to them through Paul’s exposure to them of the more accurate path to serving God.

Acts 17:30 Therefore having **overlooked the times of ignorance**, God is NOW **declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent**.

(See Also **Acts 14:16; Rom. 3:25**)

Overlooked = To overlook, to act as if one did not see, to wink at, to bear with¹.

Acts 17:30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now **COMMANDS** all men everywhere to repent (**NKJV**)

The words **DECLARE** (NASB) and **COMMANDS** (NKJV) convey an **announcement** with a strong **charge or order**. In other words, it is non-negotiable. In times of ignorance, God overlooked 'ignorance', but NOW, He commands men to repent. Why? Because NOW, in this dispensation, a lot of knowledge and revelation has come to us through the proliferation of apostolic doctrine and truth from God's Word.

Consider and read through the following scriptures:

Prov. 20:27 The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, Searching all the innermost parts of his being

Psalms 18:28 For You light my lamp; The Lord my God illumines my darkness

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path

Prov. 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life

Psalms 19:8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes

Job 29:3 When His lamp shone over my head, And by His light I walked through darkness

2 Sam. 21:17b Then the men of David swore to him, saying, You shall not go out again with us to battle, so that you do not extinguish the lamp of Israel

[See also 1 Kings 11:36]

Psalms 119:130 The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple

The Word of God is light, but this light is only accessed when the Word is 'unfolded' or explained.

Unfolding = pēthach = opening, entrance, doorway. It indicates access into something².

Hence, we need spiritual fathers, connected to an apostolic grace source, who will be able to 'unfold' the light of God's Word, revealing its truth and depth, resulting in wisdom and understanding. Note in the verses quoted above, there are two expressions of light, viz. the 'lamp' and the 'light'. The 'lamp' of the Word is the specific 'commandment' of God that gives light and

clarity to our daily walk (Compare Psalm 119:105 with Prov. 6:23). The 'LIGHT' of the Word is the teaching or doctrine that has the effect of illuminating our path – giving long term direction and clarity to the journey that lies ahead of us. Teaching determines and sheds LIGHT on the path, and commandments provide SPECIFIC light to our next step in the path. The commandment of the Lord enlightens our eyes. We need to obey both in respect to long-term direction provided by doctrine, but also the specific and daily nudges and provocations of the Holy Spirit through the Word.

When you and I are exposed to TRUTH that sheds light on our IGNORANCE/misunderstanding of a spiritual principle or activity, and still choose to willingly engage in the inaccurate expression thereof, we cannot expect God to overlook our inaccuracy - which now becomes disobedience. When a time of ignorance and darkness has expired by virtue of truth casting light upon it, we must REPENT and TURN away from attitudes or activities informed by that darkened ignorance, and engage in the more accurate way, unveiled to us by the light of God's Word.

To reject the new understanding and still live in darkness is to incur the judgement of God. When Paul states that God will no longer excuse or wink at 'ignorance' after light and understanding has come, he immediately warns of an impending judgement.

Acts 17:31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

We will be judged by the measure of truth we have been exposed to.

JUDGEMENT ACCORDING TO DEGREE OF EXPOSURE TO TRUTH AND UNDERSTANDING

The issue of 'Judgement' will be more thoroughly addressed in our treatment of the doctrine of 'ETERNAL JUDGEMENT'. Suffice it for now to just give explanation to one principle, viz., God will judge us by the measure of 'LIGHT', 'UNDERSTANDING', or 'TRUTH' to which we have been exposed.

Examples:

(1) The DECLARATION OF CREATION

All of creation - every single aspect of it - both in Heaven and every minute detail of it on the Earth - has a VOICE! Creation speaks! It communicates aspects of God's person and purpose to human beings.

Psalm 19:1-2 The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.
(NASB)

Psalm 19:1-2 The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night **they make him known (NLT)**

Those who have never heard God's Words or principles, or the Gospel of Christ, will be judged by the degree to which 'creation' has declared or communicated unto them particular aspects of the nature and purposes of God. Therefore, no human being has an excuse for not having been made aware of Him to some degree.

Romans 1:20 For since the **creation** of the world **His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**

(2) THE STANDARD OF THE LAW

If you live under the dispensation of the 'Law', then the 'Law' is the standard by which you will be judged.

Romans 2:12 For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have **sinned under the Law** will be **judged by the Law**;

Those who lived under Moses' Law, will be judged by that same standard. The Law of Moses will not judge us in this season, since we live under the New Covenant of 'grace'.

(3) THE MEASURE OF LIGHT AND EXPOSURE TO TRUTH, OR GOD'S MIGHTY WORKS

According to the measure of enlightenment OF GOD'S WORD we have received, or exposure to the demonstration of God's mighty WORKS, so we shall we be judged by that same measure.

Matt. 11:20-24 Then He began to **denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.** Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, **they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.** Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgement than for you.

We, in this generation, will probably be judged by the highest standards, since we have the greatest measure of spiritual and moral knowledge through the gospel of Christ.

James 3:1 Let not many of you become teachers my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgement

Those who function as teachers in the Church will receive the stricter standard of judgement by virtue of their function. To whom much is given, much shall be required.

SPACE (TIME) and PLACE to REPENT

Repentance is COMMANDED - not SUGGESTED - for those who receive a Word from God or revelation of God, which exposes their inaccuracy or disobedience. We must respond repentantly with QUICKNESS, ZEAL and SINCERITY. We must not be INDIFFERENT and DISMISSIVE of God's speaking to us. We must not treat with contempt His Person and His Word to us, but must readily and willingly adjust our positions to comply with the righteous principles of His Word. The danger of rejecting His word is that we may go past the **space and place of repentance**.

Concerning 'Jezebel', God said He gave her 'space' or 'time' to repent.

Rev. 2:21 And I gave **her space to repent** of her fornication; and she repented not **(KJV)**

Rev. 2:21 I gave her **time to repent**, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. **(NASB)**

Concerning Esau, who with strong, emotive remorse sought to receive the forfeited blessing of inheritance from his father, after he despised his birthright and traded it to Jacob for bowl of lentils, the scriptures indicate that he went past the 'PLACE' of repentance, not finding it.

Heb. 12:17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for **he found no PLACE for repentance**, though he sought for it **with tears**

God gives us both space (time) and place to repent. The '**space of repentance**' is the time frame God affords us to repent - those moments when He is speaking to us, addressing specific issues in our lives. The '**place of repentance**' speaks of a **capacity or ability to repent**, and this know is God-given. **When you refuse to repent in the SPACE (time) he asks you to, and you repetitively refuse to do so, it is possible to move past the PLACE of repentance.**

A Reminder:

Prov. 29:1 Whoever remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed - without remedy.

NATIONAL REPENTANCE AND REFORMATION IN RELATIONSHIPS LED BY EZRA WITH DEEP HUMILITY

Ezra 9:1-5 (ESV)

- 1 After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, “The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites **have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands** with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.
- 2 For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the **holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands. And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost.**”
- 3 As soon as I heard this, I **tore my garment and my cloak** and **pulled hair from my head** and **beard** and sat **appalled**.
- 4 Then **all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel**, because of the **faithlessness** of the returned exiles, gathered around me **while I sat appalled** until the evening sacrifice.
- 5 And at the evening sacrifice **I rose from my fasting**, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out **my hands to the Lord my God. (ESV)**

In Ezra 9, Ezra discovers that the nation had not observed God’s law concerning marriage with foreign nations and that this ‘unfaithfulness’ was mostly practiced and led by the rulers of the people, thus encouraging its widespread practice in the nation. The sins of leaders have more serious ramifications than those who they lead. This is so because of the representational principle embedded within leadership. Leaders are gateways either for great blessing or great proneness to err in their people. In the repentance of the nation concerning the issue of inter-marriage, the leaders, as representatives of the rest of the people, were foremost in their repentance and humility before God.

Ezra 10:14 Let our leaders represent the whole assembly and let all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of each city, until the fierce anger of our God on account of this matter is turned away from us.

The sheer extent of inter-marriage ‘appalled’ Ezra and he humbled himself with fasting in an attitude of deep repentance. A certain group of people who had deep reverence and esteem for God’s Word also joined him. We need to maintain our **love for, respect and honour** for God’s principles – we **need to ‘tremble at His Word’**. To the man who highly esteems and obeys God’s speaking, God has promised to make that man His final dwelling place (See **John 14:21-23**).

Isaiah 66:1-2

- 1 Thus says the Lord, “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And **where is a place that I may rest?**

2 “For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,” declares the Lord.
“But to this one **I will look**, To him who is **humble and contrite of spirit**, and who **trembles at My word**.”

Ezra had to be very strong and courageous in administrating a mass divorce process. It was difficult for everyone, especially where marriages were long and there were children involved. Ezra referenced the fact that a **‘BRIEF MOMENT OF GRACE’** had been afforded by God for everyone to obey his directives in this matter.

Ezra 9:8 But now for **a brief moment grace** has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may **enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving** in our bondage.

Grace is more than God’s PARDON for sin. It is also God’s POWER to enable us to obey God and overcome sin. When Ezra references a BRIEF MOMENT OF GRACE, he is saying that they can repent and rectify the wrong done, because GRACE was released by God toward the nation for them to do this. When God affords a moment of GRACE - of GRACE-ENABLED power - for you to obey Him in some respect, then do not let that moment pass you by. The KJV version of the Bible calls this **‘A SPACE OF GRACE’**.

Ezra 9:8a And now for **a little space grace** hath been *shewed* from the LORD our God, ...

Within the **‘SPACE of repentance’**, God grants a **‘SPACE of grace’**, bringing us to the **‘PLACE of repentance’**.

Moment/Space = Rega = An instant, a moment³.
It refers to a **brief, definite moment in time** (Ex. 33:5; Ezra 9:8; Isa. 54:8);
or to **something done at once, instantly** (Num. 16:21,45[17:10]);
suddenly (Ps. 6:10[11])

This period is brief - an instant. The word **‘rega’** is from the root word, **‘raga’**, meaning to **‘wink’**⁴, denoting the quickness of the passage of time. So one must not DELAY, nor DEFER repentance with restitution, in a season in which GOD is not only requiring it, but also facilitating and enabling it by His Grace.

A WORD TO LEADERS ADMINISTRATING REPENTANCE, EITHER IN THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS OR CORPORATELY.

At times, like HE did in Ezra’s case, God will call upon a leader to speak to His people (individuals or groups) about repentance from particular sins, and perhaps also to guide the administration thereof, especially in a corporate context. This is all the more necessary when the sin has been protracted over a long period of time. Leaders must exercise great wisdom in doing this, and rely upon the close leading of the Holy Spirit. Also, it may cost the leader much in doing this, in his bid

to accurately represent God in the process, one which might not receive the approval or applause of men. To encourage Ezra to be bold in administering the mass divorce of every inaccurate marriage, Shechaniah greatly encouraged him.

Ezra 10:4 Arise! For this matter is **your responsibility**, but **we will be with you**; be **courageous and act.**"

Whilst most of the leaders complied with the directive of God through Ezra, a few did not. Those who oppose a God-directed initiative to repent, with restitution, must not deter the leader from continuing with leading the process to its conclusion.

Ezra 10:15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah **opposed this**, with Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite supporting them.

ZEALOUSLY REPENT

Rev. 3:19 'Those **whom I love**, I **reprove** and **discipline**; therefore **BE ZEALOUS** and **repent**.

The word '**ZEAL**' means to desire **EARNESTLY** or to **PURSUE**⁵. One cannot be casual about the matter of repentance. It demands a sense of seriousness, weighted-ness, gravity and urgency. Whole-heartedness and timeous response must also characterise it.

The seriousness and **SWIFTNESS** with which you respond in repentance, the **SOONER** God's grace and mercy are activated, not only in dealing with the issue of your sin and forgiving you, but in terms of the quickness with which the many blessings associated with repentance and restitution can be accessed.

Psalms 81:13-14 "Oh that My people would **LISTEN TO ME**, That Israel would walk in My ways! "I would **QUICKLY** subdue their enemies And turn My hand against their adversaries.

REPENTANCE PREPARES THE HEART FOR GOD'S GOVERNANCE AND RULE

John the Baptist's message was one of repentance that prepares the way for God's rulership to be experienced in our lives. He said, "REPENT, for the **KINGDOM** of Heaven is **AT HAND**".

Matt. 3:2,3 Now in those days **John the Baptist** came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, **Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, '**Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!**' "

The reference to the 'Kingdom' denotes God's authority and governance and the right of rulership or dominion expressed in and through us, His sons. We were created for dominion and rule according to Gen. 1:26-28, with the experience of blessing, multiplication and fruitfulness.

Gen. 1:26-28

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

Sin erodes our capacity to have dominion in any respect in life, but REPENTANCE from sin opens up the way for KINGDOM GOVERNANCE to return to us. The promise of dominion and blessings was given to the IMAGE and LIKENESS of God in man. But sin mars and distorts this image in man. Repentance from sin seeks to restore the Divine image of God in man, for this image is the principle and authority by which men will thrive successfully in the earth. Where there is no REPENTANCE, there can be NO RULERSHIP.

Repentance PREPARES THE WAY for the experience of dominion, practical blessing, fruitfulness and increase. As implied from the record of John as a voice crying in the wilderness, repentance 'PREPARES THE WAY OF THE LORD'. Repentance makes the 'crooked path straight', creating a HIGHWAY for God to come riding into your situation to release favour, blessing and dominion.

Jesus' first message was the same as John's:

Matt. 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "**Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.**"

Jesus, from a heart of love, chides the Laodicean Church for their luke-warmness, amongst other things, and required of them to '**repent**'.

Rev. 3:19 'Those **whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.**

The result would be an **OVERCOMING** and **RULING** disposition.

Rev. 3:21a He who **OVERCOMES, I will grant to him to SIT down with Me on My THRONE ...**

REPENTANCE and RULERSHIP go hand in hand. The first results in the second.

REPENTANCE FUELS FAITH AND BELIEF

“FAITH” will be explored in detail within this study series. At its basic and simplest level, faith is believing and trusting in God. This includes being absolutely convinced that what He said or promised in and through His Word, is true and will certainly come to pass, in spite of contradictory circumstances. When God speaks, we must believe and obey Him. This is how we OVERCOME. Our internal disposition and external expressions of faith, reflected in obedience to God’s commands, is what OVERCOMES the world.

1 John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.

Now, how important is repentance from sin and disobedience, to growing and developing in faith?

Mark 1:14, 15 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.**”

For the Kingdom of God to be fully expressed in our lives, we have got to break the stubbornness of self-will and come to a place of humble submission to God’s requirements for our lives. Note in Mark 1:15, repentance is mentioned first, then secondly, belief or faith. **Where there is a repentant heart, there exists the possibility for a heart full of faith to embrace God’s principles and promises.** The unrepentant heart is one that can neither receive faith, nor grow and develop in faith or express faith through obedience.

Israel could not enter their ‘rest’ or ‘Promised Land’ because of UNBELIEF, which indicates a LACK OF FAITH.

Heb. 3:19 So we see that they were **not able to enter** because of **unbelief**.

This UNBELIEF was nurtured because of unrepentant EVIL in the heart.

An evil heart of unbelief prevents the receipt, development and expression of faith. Note in Hebrews 3:12 quoted below, Israel’s heart is described as ‘EVIL’ and ‘UNBELIEVING’. The evilness results in the unbelief.

Heb. 3:12,13 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

The evil heart is an unbelieving heart. The repentful heart is a heart ready to express and grow in faith. Even in the listing of the 'elementary doctrines' of Christ in Hebrews 6:1,2, the first is 'repentance from dead works', then follows 'faith towards God'. A serious hindrance to growing in faith is a hardened heart. This hardened heart refuses to repent from sin, which has succeeded in its deceitful intent in the person. The person lives short-sightedly, only for the immediate gratification of the sinful pleasure. In the process, the person negates development in faith, which is critically essential for establishing relationship with God, pleasing God, fulfilling the will of God, overcoming the devil and the world, and accessing tremendous practical blessings and breakthroughs in Christ.

*The heart of repentance
is the heart prepared for
faith, that overcomes.*

[To Be Continued]

Great Grace and Peace be multiplied to you,
Randolph Barnwell

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ENDNOTES

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