

## The Fruit Of Repentance

Real Repentance Produces Things

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Faith and repentance is the foundation upon which Christian living is built. Without faith there would be no repentance that leads to growth as a Christian, no glorifying of God, and no growth and overcoming. Without repentance, one's faith will never be rightly used, and therefore no salvation. These two function as the platform upon which our hopes for eternal life, being with Christ and the Father, and functioning forever in vibrant good health, working within God's continuing purpose, and helping build whatever Their brilliant and loving minds are planning.

This sermon is going to function as a fairly detailed explanation of elements basic to what repentance is, and what repentance produces. Most of it is going to be on what repentance produces. Repentance has a number of characteristics within it, and all of them functioning together are helpful and necessary toward making the very best use of it.

I recently read an old article written by Leon Walker which drew upon an even older article by Herbert Armstrong. Since we are to examine ourselves at this time of the year to evaluate whether we are in the faith, I think this will be helpful toward reminding us of repentance's importance. It will focus on giving us insights into those elements by which we can keep track of whether we have repented, and are *still* repentant. The Bible reveals that there is still very much of a need for it even now.

Turn with me to I John 1. Remember, John was writing to converted people.

**I John 1:7-10** But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

**I John 2:1-2** My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

The apostle Paul's revelation of himself in Romans 7, and John's statements right here, are clear reminders that we still sin, and we need to repent of those sins. It is what we are by nature, and the individual sins which that nature continues to motivate are what we must repent of. The "what we are" is the one that is truly important, because it generates the individual sin.

I want us to notice Christ's evaluation of some of the first century congregations back in Revelation 2 and 3. These verses will serve as a reminder that human nature just does not get blown away. Whenever we repent, human nature remains there like so much leaven fermenting within us, and every once in a while it is going to produce a sin.

First we will go to the message to the church of Ephesus in verse 5 of Revelation 2:

**Revelation 2:5** Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

We will skip over Smyrna and go on to Pergamos in verse 16.

**Revelation 2:16** [To the church at Pergamos:] Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them [who are sinning] with the sword of My mouth.

**Revelation 2:22** [To the church at Thyatira:] Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

**Revelation 3:3** [To the church at Sardis:] Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

**Revelation 3:19** [To the church at Laodicea:] As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

We look at these because I believe that those first-century congregations reflect congregations at the end-time. The book of Revelation is an end-time book, and it is pointed to those of us who live in this period of time just before the return of Jesus Christ. And even as Jesus called them into account to repent, even though many of them might have been Christians for 30, 40, or 50 years, I call upon you, using Jesus' word, to repent too, because it remains within us. We have the need to do it.

Go back to II Corinthians 13 and we will connect this to this period of time we are in right now coming up to the Days of Unleavened Bread.

**II Corinthians 13:4-5** For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you. Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

It is essential for us to understand that like faith, repentance must function throughout our entire Christian life. Its most basic element is introspection as judge against the truth of God. It most certainly is not a quality we have as we begin Christian life, and then just forget about, and drop. It must be a constant aspect of our life in Christ, for without it we will not grow.

As we begin, let us first hear from Herbert Armstrong as he speaks to us from a fairly long quote in his booklet, *The Unpardonable Sin*. Listen very carefully to the first sentence.

Repentance is a change of mind and attitude. It is a change from this carnal attitude of hostility toward God, of rebellion against God's law to the opposite attitude of love, submission, obedience, and worship of God, and reliance on Him. It is an about-face in attitude and intent to the way of God's righteousness. Repentance means that you have really come to see yourself as you are, as *God* sees you, as a self-centered, hostile, shriveled up, rotten, vile, filthy sinning hulk of rotting human flesh unworthy to breathe the free air God gives you. [I am glad he held himself back!] It means to be sorry not only for what you have done, [here is the important thing] but also for what you are, that you have come to abhor yourself, that you come emotionally broken up, throwing yourself on God's mercy, asking His forgiveness and His redemption. It means wanting to be made righteous. To repent means to

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totally change attitude and heart, a continuously repentant attitude, for God's Spirit will dwell only in such a mind.

Let us begin with a couple of definitions so that we are familiar with the foundational meaning of the word "repent" from Hebrew and from Greek.

True repentance is something similar to a one-two punch in a boxing match. The Hebrew word *nacham* (*naw-kham*) is a primary root that literally means "to sigh—to breathe strongly, like pant." By implication it means "to be sorry; having disgust with the self." It also tends to indicate a level of pain. As used in Scripture, in most cases it is used to indicate a strong turning in the mind or heart first, followed by a turning of conduct to a new course of action. The one precedes the other. It begins in the mind; then it ends with a change of conduct.

The Greek verb *metanoia* (*met-an-oy-ah*) literally means "to think differently," or "afterward reconsider." In a moral circumstance, it carries a sense of compunction, of sorrow with it. Like the Hebrew term, it implies a change of mind or purpose, and always, in the New Testament, the change is for the better. *Always it is a change for the better.*

Both terms thus have somewhat of an emotional content, but we do not want to allow our understanding of repentance to be dominated by the emotional aspect. Here is why: The overall reason is that emotions cannot be trusted.

I want you to go to Matthew 27. This occurred to a very famous character.

**Matthew 27:3-5** Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

See now why we have to be careful of the emotions. Judas was emotional. He *knew* that he had done wrong. He was intensely remorseful, but it only led him to commit another sin—suicide. Nothing in him changed.

Let us go to II Corinthians 7. Paul is writing, and we are breaking into a sentence here. I

think Paul is talking about Titus here.

**II Corinthians 7:7-9** . . . and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more. For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle [of I Corinthians] made you sorry, though only for a while. 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.

Paul speaks of an emotional content in repentance. It is a sorrow that leads to repentance. It does not dominate it, because it does not blot out the mind working in the right direction, and it leads to repentance. The emotion—the sorrow—is not repentance all by itself, but that sorrow of which Paul speaks leads to a positive change of conduct—not like the suicide that Judas committed. A different kind of sorrow might be nothing more than self-pity that changes nothing, as shown in Judas' case.

I and II Corinthians teach us about sin and repentance about as well as any two books in the Bible. The Corinthian congregation was a congregation that had many different kinds of sins being committed within it. Chapter one of I Corinthians begins with the revelation that the congregation was divided along party lines—"I am of Paul," "I am of Peter," "I am of Jesus Christ," and so forth. Instead of being uniformly supportive of Jesus Christ, all that it did was produce varying levels of intensity of *disloyalty* to Jesus Christ. It might have looked good, and felt good, but Peter was not Christ, nor was he our Savior.

By the time you get done reading I Corinthians 1, the vanity in those people was palpable. The vanity was a reality despite the fact that in their calling, the Corinthians were told right in chapter one that they were the lowly of the world. They thought a lot of themselves though.

In chapter 5 Paul reveals that there was flagrant *porneia* in the congregation. *Porneia* is generally translated in the New Testament as fornication, but in Greek it literally encompassed a wide variety of sexual sins, and in this particular case a member was having sex with his father's wife.

Chapter 6 shows they were taking one another to worldly civil courts. Chapter 7 shows that there were marital problems. Chapter 8 shows that other members were offending

those weak in the faith by eating meat offered to idols. In chapter 11 the abuse of some brethren during Passover services became teaching for us.

In chapter 12 it reveals that those people had a woeful misunderstanding of their place in the body of Jesus Christ. In chapter 14 we find that others were abusing their spiritual gifts and creating disorder during congregational meetings. It seems as though everybody in that congregation wanted to preach, including women, and so they were battling with one another. Besides that, there were outright heresies, and some did not understand the resurrection, and many people in that congregation were openly against the apostle Paul.

We are going to go to I Corinthians to pick up a little bit more about the Corinthians and Paul's judgment of them. Notice the way he speaks to them.

**I Corinthians 3:1-4** And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

That pretty much sums up the spiritual level of that congregation and why they were behaving as though they were unconverted, but they were converted. The apostle Paul was sure of that, but it shows you again why I opened the way I did in this sermon. Repentance is needed through our entire Christian life. It is not something we just do at the beginning by faith in Jesus Christ and His blood, and then think that well, we are converted, we are here, and we do not have to repent again. Not so.

Can we see, or can you at least admit to yourself why repentance is needed following conversion? One thing is sure—they were guilty of very bad choices, and most of I Corinthians is a pretty stinging rebuke. Paul addressed those Corinthians as if they were carnal. They were converted, but they were not *going on to perfection*. It does not mean everyone in the congregation was like this, because there were some good ones there too he mentions in the first chapter.

We are going to turn to Hebrews 5 where there is a little bit different circumstance with another congregation.

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**Hebrews 5:9-11** And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

We will say these people at one time had been very converted, but they were going down hill. Not like the Corinthians. The Corinthians were going to go up. The Hebrews were coming down because they had become dull of hearing.

**Hebrews 5:12-14** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

These people were slipping away, and they needed to repent. There is only so far that one can slide to perdition.

**Hebrews 6:1-6** Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

That, brethren, is the unpardonable sin. I do not think I need to go any further there. But in this section Paul directly calls repentance and faith toward God as foundational; however, they are also linked directly to “going on to perfection.” I think we have a clue here. We clearly understand that we must live by faith, and it is to be used constantly, day by day, as we also understand. This we readily understand and accept; however, repentance is also rightly named, tightly linked with faith, and therefore repentance is not just something needed at the beginning of one’s conversion, but like faith, it too is

needed through the entire process as we go on to perfection. That is very clear.

The Corinthians, like the Hebrews, had not slipped to the critical line yet. As Paul nears the conclusion of I Corinthians, he provides them with the sublime counsel that he gave in I Corinthians 13. In one sense he pinpointed the crux of their problem, which is, they did not love God, and they did not love their fellow members in that congregation. It is that plain. It is that simple. They loved themselves.

Love is a choice. It *is* the keeping of the commandments. It *is* deliberately choosing to do what is right and good even if one has to sacrifice to do it. Love is an action. This is what I Corinthians 13 is teaching us. It is choosing to be kind, choosing to be patient, choosing to bite one's tongue and to hold one's peace. It is choosing to go the extra mile, suffer loss, and to be forgiving. Paul's counsel was heeded because, brethren, these people repented. That is the good part of the story. But boy! He had to rail at them to get them to see. They made *major* changes in their conduct, and II Corinthians does not have the same tone to it that I Corinthians did, because they had repented.

**II Corinthians 7:8-11** For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. 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. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What **diligence** it produced in you, what **clearing of yourselves**, what **indignation**, what **fear**, what **vehement desire**, what **zeal**, what **vindication**! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. (emphasis ours)

Is that not interesting? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. What Paul has just given us there is the fruit of real repentance, and it is very interesting. There are seven characteristics that real repentance will produce. It produces diligence, clearing, indignation, fear, desire, zeal, and revenge. Some of those sound pretty interesting.

So real repentance has seven fruits to it, and each of those fruits functions to support the whole and to keep it alive, and producing growth toward perfection throughout one's converted life. We are going to cover all seven by expounding on their meaning and their application.

## **Fruit: Diligence**

Let us begin with “diligence.” The *New King James* says “diligence.” The *King James Version* says “carefulness.” This word in the Greek is derived from a word that literally means “speed,” but in a context such as this, “speed” becomes used as eagerness, earnestness, dispatch, diligence, and even forwardness. It has this sense of a business-like haste and alertness to get something accomplished.

What a change! I Corinthians shows that the Corinthians were very casual about sin, and downright lethargic about their spiritual responsibilities and indifferent in their regard for each other. Now, because they had really repented, they were on fire to set things right. That is what diligence does to a person. “Boy! I’m going to do this right this time, and make myself happy in doing it.”

**II Peter 1:4-7** . . . by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all **diligence**, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. (emphasis ours)

Diligence gives people the *oomph*—the motivation—to accomplish. If we truly repent, one of the fruits of that repentance will be diligence, and by it you can be sure that the repentance is real. Now the Corinthians were putting their knowledge of God into loving action.

**Matthew 26:41** Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

God is willing to back us up when we turn our diligence toward accomplishing what is right and good. But you see, human nature does not often want to do things that we *should* do, but real spiritual repentance motivates us in the direction of spiritual accomplishment, and we desire to replace the carnality—the vanity of lust, the competitiveness, and envy—with brotherly kindness. I caution you, this is not a momentary blaze of glory, but a serious, business-like, steady approach toward the right goals.

## **Fruit: Clearing of self**

This is a very interesting fruit of repentance. The underlying Greek word is *apologia* (*ap-ol-og-ee-ah*). It sounds like the English word “apology,” but it does not mean that at all. The word literally means “defense,” and it is often used to define an explanation of one’s beliefs, but in this case we have got to go back a little bit further to the very root of that word *apologia*. The root of the word is *apolouho* (*ap-ol-oo-o*), which means “to wash away,” or “to wash oneself.” Now you are beginning to see a bit of the term “clearing” appear. When you wash, things become clear.

I want you to think back on the sin these people were committing as shown in I Corinthians. What was it doing, brethren, to their reputation? Those sins were destroying their reputation of not glorifying God. Their sins were making them dirty, and this clearing of yourself is showing another benefit of repentance. It was clearing their good name and restoring their reputation before both God and man.

I want you to go back to a scripture in Jeremiah that Ted [Bowling] used in his sermonette last week. God is complaining to Jeremiah:

**Jeremiah 6:15** Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall.

These peoples’ reputation was already destroyed to the place where they could not even repent. Real repentance of a Christian person will begin to clear the dirt of the stain of the reputation the person has picked up because of their sins. You can see the same scripture in Jeremiah 8.

**Jeremiah 8:12** Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed, nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall.

**Psalms 103:11-13** For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him.

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This is why the person begins to feel cleared of the stain of sin. It is God who removes the dirt. He just takes it away.

Now there should be shame if there is some knowledge of sin, and there is one way to rid the self of it, and that is to change one's life by stopping sin in it. Repentance motivated the Corinthians to move in the right direction. When real repentance motivates one to clear his reputation of no further blame—and the best defense (*apologia*) for destroying one's name is to build a good one—a person can honestly say, "I used to be that way, but I don't go that way anymore."

I want you to see something, because there is a congregation that Paul felt very good about. It was the Thessalonians. Notice what he wrote about them in I Thessalonians 1.

**I Thessalonians 1:2-3** We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, . . .

**I Thessalonians 1:7-8** . . . so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia [Corinth] who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

What a witness those people made! Unfortunately, the Corinthians were not like that. The Thessalonians had been cleared of guilt by God, and they had gone forth with attitudes that reflected upon God in a very good way.

### **Fruit: Indignation**

This fruit is really interesting. I think at first it would be good to define this English word "indignation." *The Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedia Dictionary* defines it as "anger aroused by injustice or baseness"—*righteous* anger. This is an anger with a specific narrow and righteous motivation. The Greek word is *aganaktesis* (*ag-an-ak-tay-sis*). It literally means "much grieved; to feel violent irritation." We are going to see how this is used in a number of places. The first one is in Matthew 21:15, so you feel the force of this word.

**Matthew 21:15-16** But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful

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things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?”

They were so indignant they were moved to *kill* Him! That is how strong this feeling can be.

Let us go to Matthew 20:24. This is the time when the mother of Zebedees’ sons came to Jesus asking for a special place for her sons.

**Matthew 20:24** And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.

That word “displeased” is kind of softened there. They were *indignant!* Their anger had a narrow focus, and that focus was James and John. I think they were upset!

**Mark 10:13-14** Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.

Jesus was indignant! He was angry! The important thing of its use in II Corinthians 7:11 is to recognize the source of anger. Paul said, “Be angry, and sin not.” What has to be done is recognize the source of your anger, and whom it is aimed at, and be careful. The anger should be aimed at the sin, and at the sin’s perpetrator—and that is oneself.

If you repented, and you are cleared, and you are indignant, whom are you angry at? You should be angry at yourself for committing the sin in the first place. What he is saying is that if we really repented, one of the fruits of it will be indignation that we can turn against ourselves for being so dumb, so stupid, so weak to do such a stupid thing. It is one of those circumstances where one is so angry at oneself, that if it were physically possible, one would kick oneself in the butt so hard that one would really get a pain from it.

This anger contains elements of sincere hatred, and in this case it is a justified one.

**I Corinthians 5:1-5** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality

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among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even name among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

What was the congregation’s problem here? It was their overall attitude being one of easy, tolerant acceptance of a despicable evil within their congregation. A leaven was there, and the danger was that the leaven was going to spread to others, and they would commit other sins. So they were deeply imbued with the same attitude as the entire city. If you have ever read anything on the history of Corinth, that is the way the whole city was. It had a reputation that somehow or other this evil was acceptable, that it was good, and should be tolerated.

How can one overcome anything that is wrong in one’s life unless one believes that everything that is against the righteousness of God is evil and despicable, and we should hate it? The people in Corinth did not hate sin until Paul scolded them, and they began to get the picture more clearly.

Let us look at the comment of a man who did repent. That of course was Job. In Job 42 he scolds himself. The words here are written for our admonition.

**Job 42:5-6** I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

The difference in the perception of the seriousness of sin between this godly man and the Corinthian congregation was as wide as the Grand Canyon. In this case the sin was Job’s, and his anger was turned against himself, but he did something about it. Do you know what? The Corinthians did too. They disfellowshipped the man to register their displeasure against his sin. They kicked him out of the congregation, and then he, in turn, repented.

Now we see the Corinthians with a God-induced righteous indignation which undoubtedly stood them in good stead in their personal relationship with God. Brethren,

I believe this is one of the major failings of the American citizenry of this time in our history. We are so tolerant it is incredible!

I want to remind you of something that I said during the Feast when I gave one of those sermons on the book of Ecclesiastes. The question I asked at that time was, "Why do our children do as they do?" The answer: Because they can. Here is the way Solomon put it.

**Ecclesiastes 8:11** Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

Americans lost their sense of morality when the churches, for whatever reason, stopped preaching about sin and its devastating effects on themselves and others and the culture as a whole. They forgot about sin, and as time slipped by, generation after generation became more and more tolerant, and now, brethren, almost anything goes. We have not hit the bottom yet, but we are sliding that way. And why is our culture going in that direction? Because they can do it, and basically nobody is stopping them. The government is not stopping them. They are sliding into the same pit as the rest of the people.

I have a great deal more just on this one fruit of indignation, but I am going to turn aside from that and go on to the next one. This next one is in II Corinthians 8:9.

### **Fruit: Vehement Desire**

This is only one word in the Greek, and it is normally translated by one word in English. The word is "longing." The word indicates a strong and persistent craving. Not necessarily sin, but often it is sin. In this case it is a good fruit: strong, persistent craving.

The point here is, how can one change unless one really and truly *wants* to? What if one could not care less? That is the point here. One of the fruits of real repentance is that God will instill in us a desire to change; a *longing* to change.

What if one is so distracted because one's attention is on entertainment, or seeking knowledge, but doing nothing with the knowledge one gets, or giving oneself vehemently to some priority by which one becomes famous or makes money? What I am getting at here is that a person who is longing for something keeps himself focused on that for which he is longing. God is in favor of that. He wants us to long for things that

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are right and good. That is why it is one of the fruits of repentance.

**Matthew 5:6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Hunger is a form that induces longing. Righteousness is doing right, and this verse clearly states that we must vehemently desire to want to change. One who is truly repentant will apply himself to change. The implication in Christ's Word in Matthew 5:6 is that those who do not hunger and thirst will not be filled. So in order to be filled, one must *long* for the Word of God and righteousness.

I can give you another scripture on this that reinforces what I just said here.

**I Peter 2:1-3** Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking [all of which are sins], as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Anybody who has a baby knows that when that baby is hungry it does all it can to attract attention, and that gives you a good picture of what Peter was getting at here. That is the way, in type, we as adults need to respond to God and His Word.

Now getting back to the central theme here, Paul says that kind of longing is a fruit of repentance.

Let us also look at verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 51.

**Psalm 51:1-2** Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

David appealed with all of the emotional strength within him that God would forgive him.

### **Fruit: Zeal**

This quality magnifies the other terms that are similar to it, but it also tends to

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emphasize what the Corinthians lacked while they were sinning. They were very tolerant while they were sinning, and then the contrast that came into their lives when they repented. If you read the whole context of the two books, you will find that they were on fire. They were really zealous. Paul was confirming that. But they were not zealous for God before the repentance.

Zeal signifies ardor, fervent enthusiasm, whole-heartedness, and passion for accomplishing a task. It can be any task, but we are talking here about growing and overcoming. Zeal tends to indicate a labor of love.

**Galatians 6:9** And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

We have to add something to the attitude that is there, but when we do, it carries one through those periods when one feels like giving in to laziness and tiredness. Zeal motivates one to drive on.

### **Fruit: Revenge**

The seventh one is “revenge.” Sometimes it is translated “vindication.” That word kind of seems strange, but he lists it here because we think of it in the sense of retaliation after someone has wronged us. Some small amount of that sense is retained in this context because the congregation did set things right regarding the sinner. They inflicted punishment on him by putting him out of the group, and it worked. He repented.

*Barnes Notes* says that the word also has a sense of “the maintenance of right,” or “the setting things aright.” That may include the punishment that can be done to a person who is part of the congregation, and it can be done to the self as well by facing up to a sin and doing whatever is necessary to set things right, even though it may prove costly to oneself. In that case the person would correct the cause of what he has done through repentance, and after some manner punishing himself, denying himself, sacrificing himself, and come clean. This would not forgive him, but it would then *vindicate* before others that he truly had repented. So the revenge would be carried out on the self.

What we see here in II Corinthians 7 is a package of qualities—fruit, good qualities—which build a godly self-esteem and in turn will lead us to repent, and repent, and repent, and repent. Why? Because it feels so good. That is no kidding! When a sin is put behind us, we *feel* these things that are given as fruit in II Corinthians 7. We feel clean. We feel vindicated. We feel washed. Our zeal is restored, and on and on it goes.

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In other words, continuously; over and over, as we continuously have sinned, and then have it revealed to us by God, and we see the need, we repent again.

None of this will mean a thing unless we see ourselves in the only comparison that really means anything in life, and that is against the character of the Father and the Son themselves. Unless we can perceive some small measure of Their goodness, righteousness, love, mercy, and Their purpose, and our desire to be like Them, all will go for naught. And why? Because there will be no humility to provide the foundation for one to submit to Him.

It is only those who are “poor in spirit” who will subject themselves to the demands of repentance. Repentance is demanding because it necessarily involves voluntary giving up of the self, and not just once, because repentance, as we saw at the beginning of the sermon, is not a one-time event. It takes many repentances to grow, because God’s educational process never ends as we are brought to perfection. But if we *will* repent, the motivating energies named by Paul will be supplied by God because He greatly desires to keep us going on to become like Them.