

Repentance And Righteousness (Part 1)

Becoming Free from Sin

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In the church of God, we have often said, heard, and read that the holy days picture the plan of God.

Now, depending upon our perspective, we think of this in two different ways. The first is, "The holy days depict God's plan for all mankind for all time." The second is more like, "The holy days show God's plan for the individual Christian." In other words, some have a wider view than others who are more personal. Obviously, these are not mutually exclusive. What happens to one, happens to the other. But some take it more generally than others.

In Exodus 12, we are at the beginning of the seven annual holy days, and we start with the Days of Unleavened Bread. We are going to take a look at the reason why God said He made these Days of Unleavened Bread.

Exodus 12:15-17 'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, [here is the reason] for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.

God gave this instruction before the Days of Unleavened Bread was actually kept, and the reason was that He would liberate them from Egypt. That was God's reason for having the Days of Unleavened Bread.

So now, we keep it as a memorial of God's freeing us from spiritual Egypt—this world. And, we keep it because of God's freeing us from sin—this world's bondage—the slavery that we were under, that we suffered before God called us.

Now notice that in verse 16 it says that we are to have a holy convocation on the first

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

day and the seventh day. Why do we commemorate the seventh day then? If the first day was the day that they came out of Egypt, why do we commemorate the seventh day, a whole week later? Well, you may say, "Well, that's when they crossed the Red Sea." This is partly right. The correct answer would be that on this day, the last Day of Unleavened Bread, God liberated them from Egypt! It is the same reason as the first day.

That is interesting! This should teach us something. It took the children of Israel seven days from the time that they began walking out of wherever they were in the land of Goshen to reach the Red Sea. The Red Sea was the border of Egypt, not Goshen. So they had to walk through a lot of territory before they got to the Red Sea.

And when they got to the Red Sea, Egypt was pursuing them, and it was only by a great and awesome miracle performed by our great God that they finally escaped Egypt and the clutches of Pharaoh—a type of Satan—at all.

Now, what does this tell you about the length of time that it will take us to leave the world, our sins, and Satan's clutches? Well, it tells me that leaving Egypt is a process that occurs over a long period of time. And we emulate this by keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread for all seven days, because by being freed and redeemed, we start our trudge out of Egypt, fleeing our slavery as fast as we can. But you know that that fleeing from Egypt never ends. We are constantly fleeing from Egypt.

Remember in John 17 that Jesus said something like, "I do not ask you (Father) to take them out of the world, but to leave them in the world, even as they are not part of the world. They have some things to learn." So maybe this is the reason (and I believe it is) why this is a seven-day festival. We spend all this time—the remainder of our lives—years (fleeing Egypt). I am sure there are people listening to (and reading) this sermon who could chalk up 20, 30, 40, even 50 years of struggling to leave Egypt. It is a hard trudge every step of the way.

And then, at the end, it takes an awesome and mighty miracle from God to get us completely free. It says that He will raise us up at the last day.

So, in this sermon and the next, we are going to concentrate on two steps of the process that are shown in these Days of Unleavened Bread. Both of these steps in the process help to free us from sin. These two steps are so intricately linked that they are virtually inseparable. But because of the different ways we approach these things, God shows us that it is two different steps to the process. And, both of these steps are things that we—you and me, human beings—must do ourselves, with, of course, the help of

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

God's Holy Spirit because we cannot do anything without the help of God's Holy Spirit.

But these two particular things are things that we have to do.

Many of you know this section as *The Six Basic Doctrines of the Church*.

Hebrews 6:1 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.

This is all the farther we need to go, because we have now already read the two steps of the process that I want to speak about today, as well as last Day of Unleavened Bread. We are talking about "going on to perfection," and "repentance." But, I am going to reverse their order, here, because repentance truly comes first. And, instead of calling it "going on to perfection," I will call it just simply "righteousness."

So, our topics this week will be repentance and righteousness.

Now, we think of repentance as the first step in the process of conversion and salvation—but it is not the first. It is really the second step. It is the first step that *we* do, but it is actually the second step that happens in our life. Nothing truly spiritual happens in our lives until God initiates things. We do not repent until God says, "Now is the time I'm going to give that person the opportunity to truly repent."

What did Mr. Hebert W. Armstrong say in just about every sermon he gave?

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

So, this is the actual first step—God's initiation of the relationship. It is the first real act of our repentance. Any repentance apart from God and His way of life is not true repentance. If you know that somebody has not been called by God, and you see the way that they are living, that they are just totally ungodly, but they say that they have repented, they are deceived and telling you a lie.

I John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

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I John 2:4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

I John 2:9-11 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

As John says above, if a man says that he does not sin, and yet he hates his brother, you know he is a liar because he who loves God, and he who does not sin, would love his brother.

So, any repentance apart from God and His way of life is not true repentance. And that is something for us to think about too.

We are going to prove this. The *New King James Version* has as the topic heading of this section labeled as, "All Have Sinned."

Romans 3:9 What then? Are we better than they [the world]? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

We are all sinners. We are all condemned—at one point.

Romans 3:10-18 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced 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 they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

This is why I think that the world is best at sinning. We have all done it. Everyone has

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

done it. The whole world is convicted of sin. No one is righteous. No one seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way. No one has followed God's way of life.

So, these people cannot repent until God initiates it. One cannot repent and still follow the ways of this world. It does not work. They are opposites. Such a person has not truly repented.

And this is what happens. Turn to Proverbs 14:12, a memory scripture.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

If a person repents, but it is not of God, what are they going to do? It is not a repentance that ends in eternal life. Is it really repentance? If it is not of God, they will end up going their own way, and the writer of the proverb says that it will eventually end in death, if nothing else occurs to stop it. What good is this then?

Even if we could quit and determine to only do what we consider to be good and righteous, you still have not really repented, because we are actually sinning still. It is called self-righteousness. What we have done, then, is taken God's prerogative of determining what is good and evil, and we determine what is right and wrong. This is the same exact thing that Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. And do you remember where that led to? Being kicked out of God's presence! He says, "This repentance (such as it was)—this act, choosing the determination of right and wrong for themselves—is sin! I cannot abide that!"

So, anything along the line of human repentance is not of God and leads to death.

Jeremiah 10 is a common scripture among us in the churches of God, and I know you will see that a lot of the scriptures I am turning to today are memory scriptures we use and lean on all the time.

Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

He—God—is not a part of us. We do not have the capacity of and by ourselves to determine what is good or evil.

Jeremiah 17 is another memory scripture.

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

The track record of mankind has shown that our great success has been deceiving ourselves into thinking that we know what is good and evil. So, anything that we come up with simply on our own that we consider to be repentance is not right. It has got to be by God's criteria. We have to repent in the way that God says that we must repent. If we do it any other way, it is not a true repentance.

We must question, then, "What is true repentance?"

The English word that we use—repentance—ultimately derives from a Greek word meaning "the pain." We have some sort of pain, mostly an emotional pain—to be grieved.

So, we get another clue here about true repentance, and what it is. Repentance is painful. It is wrenching. It really hurts, right there in the belly. It is hard. It is tough. It is a bitter pill to swallow. Any repentance that is easy is probably not true repentance. If we do not feel some measure of pain, we probably have not truly repented because we probably have not seen the depth of the wrong that we are, and that we have done.

Now the writers in the Old Testament used two different words for repentance. The first one is *nacham*, which means "to be sorry; to rue." This is the word that the writers of the Old Testament used to describe God's repentance, used a couple of times in the narrative where God repented of something. And really, repent is probably a bad way to translate this to, since it would be better translated as "relent." God relents.

Or maybe we could say He regrets. Like in regards to Saul when Samuel told Saul to wait until he got there before any sacrifices were to be made. Later in the story, Saul disobeyed, sacrificed, and took upon himself that which was not his to do. God said then that He regretted making Saul king.

That is the idea here. He was sorry, full of regret, that He made Saul king of Israel; He rued that decision. But, God made it work out for good, because that is His nature to do so. Everything that God does works out for the best.

This Hebrew root word, *nacham*, means "to breath strongly." We get like this when we

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

are sorry and something has gone wrong. We regret that it happened; we get this deep, even painful, sobbing expression. We are breathing strongly because we regret what we have done. This is what a typical person does when they are upset. So we see that this sort of repentance has a very strong emotional characteristic to it.

But then again, do not get very far from this—that an entirely emotional repentance is not true repentance either. Repentance is not necessarily an easy thing to pin down. It is not just that you are sorry. It is not just to have an emotional outburst about it and feel regret that we have done wrong. There is more to repentance than that.

Turn to Matthew 27 and see one of these emotional regretful repentances; it is not a true one. This is about Judas Iscariot.

Matthew 27:3-5 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He [Jesus] 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.

He had a very emotional reaction to what he had done. He was regretful and remorseful that he had betrayed an innocent Man to His death. But, what did he do? Remember what I said regarding Proverbs 14:12? He ended up sinning after repenting. Was this true repentance? Did it lead to something good? This led to further sin.

Now, obviously a human being is going to sin after he repents, but it will not be a habitual thing, and it should not lead to immediately going out and sinning again, like Judas did. The New Testament use of "remorseful" is much like the Hebrew use of *nacham*. This is really not repenting. It is just an emotion. It is part of true repentance, yes, but there is more to it.

Turn to II Corinthians 7 where we can get a distinction that Paul makes between regret or remorse and true repentance. Regarding that, remember that there had been a great sin in the Corinthian church, and Paul had written to them correcting them, "Get that man out of the church." I should also mention that Paul had told the whole congregation in Corinth that they had all been sinful in this thing. They had a lot of pride and were all puffed up, and they thought that they were being loving. So, after their rebuke and some time elapsed, Paul writes another letter.

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

II Corinthians 7:6-10 Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus [Titus had come back and reported on what had taken place since the receipt of the first letter.], 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 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.

Is that not what we saw happen with Judas? His was a worldly sorrow and immediately he hung himself—it produced his death by his own hand.

II Corinthians 7:11 For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner:

See the clues here what godly sorrow really is:

II Corinthians 7:11 What diligence it produced in you.

They really wanted to clear things up, and they were going to be on the stick and make sure that they did clear this matter up.

II Corinthians 7:11 what clearing of yourselves.

They had this desire to clear themselves of all this guilt. They wanted to do it.

II Corinthians 7:11 what indignation. . .

They were angry that it had come to that point.

II Corinthians 7:11 what fear [of God].

Fear of the punishment that would come because of this sin.

II Corinthians 7:11 what vehement desire.

They could think of nothing else, except to put this away, and get this behind them.

II Corinthians 7:11 what zeal. . .

They really want to get this done.

II Corinthians 7:11 what vindication!

That comes at the end. They were vindicated, then, and cleared of all this through Christ.

II Corinthians 7:11 In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

So we know that the sorrow is part of it, but it is supposed to produce all these other things. That is the repentance; not just the sorrow.

Worldly sorrow is nothing but self pity. We are sorry that we did something, and we are worried about what it will produce. We feel shame, maybe, that our dirty laundry has been exposed. We may fear for our reputation amongst our fellows. But does it produce anything good? Does it produce the emotions and the actions that are listed here in verse 11? Are we better once we have gone through this type of sorrow? Are we changed by it in any way? That shows the repentance. So, emotion is not the essence of repentance. It is only part of it. Change is the essence of repentance.

This is where the second Hebrew word mentioned above comes into the picture. It is the word pronounced something like *shub*. This word means "to turn," or "to return." In English we might use a more colorful term such as "about face." Say we are marching in a column, and the sergeant says, "About face!" And, you turn around and go the other way. In modern lingo, we might say, "make a one-eighty (180 degrees on the compass from zero)." We are turning off the path that leads to destruction, and turning onto the

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

narrow path—the strait gate—that leads to life in the Kingdom of God. So, with the sorrow and the emotion must come this act of turning onto the right path of God.

Here, in Ezekiel 33, we will find a typical use of the word *shub*. And this verse is found in the famous chapter on the Watchman and his message. In Ezekiel 33:7-11 every time you see the word "turn," or "return" in this section is the Hebrew word *shub*. Let us read this:

Ezekiel 33:7-11 "So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul [you have done your job; I will not put his blood on your head].

"Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, **how can we then live?**"' Say to them [the answer to this question]: '**As I live,**' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

Israel's way of life as described here is a way of evil and wickedness that leads to death. And God is saying that He implores them to leave this path and turn to the path that leads to life. He says, "If you live the way that I live My life, you too will live!" You will live forever. "I don't want you to die," He says, "but before you can live like I live My life, you've got to turn from your ways of living. You must do something to get out of that rut that leads to your own destruction." And then, you begin marching along the path that leads to life.

Ezekiel 18 is another very common scripture reference in the churches of God where God repeats the false proverb about the father who eats sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge. They had this idea that the children got the penalties for their father's sins. But God says that it does not work out that way. They may be affected by them, but they are not held responsible for their father's sins. Those sins are on their father's own heads. God has a different way of looking at it. And Israel was almost arguing with Him about it. You can almost see God scratching His head, "Don't you see

that this is a better way?" But they did not.

Ezekiel 18:27-28 "Again [God repeating Himself], when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Ezekiel 18:30-32 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

Sounds a bit like chapter 33, does it not? Notice here in verse 28, "because he considers and turns away." This is interesting. This should help us understand the process a little better. We have talked about the emotions, and we have talked about the actions, but this brings in another aspect of repentance—the rational and mental portion. Not only is our heart involved, not only are our feet involved (walking in the right way), but now our mind is going to get involved.

People, believe it or not, can repent without ever giving one bit of thought to what they are doing. But is this a true repentance? This sometimes happens when a penalty for our sins hits us right away. And we regret it. We regret that we did something. But we have not really thought it through all the way about why the thing that we did was so bad. We are sorry that whatever happened happened, but we have not really considered it yet. Unlike in verse 28, we have not considered the thing, we have only just turned without fully understanding what was going on. We feel the pain of a loss.

For example, there is an argument at home, and the man gets very angry and shoots his wife. And he sees her lying there on the floor and immediately regrets what he has done. It is entirely emotional at that point. Has he really repented of that murder? He has not truly considered it yet. He may be sorry, and he may eventually repent, but at that particular point, it is not truly repentance. It is still only regret. He may even promise himself never to do that again, but it still has not produced anything good. It has not produced a change.

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

So, true godly repentance requires thought. A person considers what he has done and the whole process—how it came to pass, how he started down that road to sin, how he got led further on down that road to sin, and how he got to the point where he could see it was not good. Then, he turns from it and really feels terrible and wretched, bitter in his heart for what he is done, and he pledges not to do it again.

Believe it or not, this is all concentrated in this Hebrew word translated "considered (verse 28)." The Hebrew word here is "ra'ah." It is very close to the word, "ru'ach," which is the word for "spirit." Typically, "ra'ah" means to see with the eyes; to observe. But, it has many metaphorical meanings just like our verb "to see" does. It means "to understand." It is to understand completely. It means to see everything from every angle that we possible can. "I see how that works! I do this, and this comes back. I see the ways that these things are related! I understand completely how this process works."

Another metaphorical meaning of *ra'ah* is another common one—to admit, or to accept. We might say things like, "I see that I need to work on this a bit more." Or, "I see that I have this problem." When we use it in this fashion, we mean, "I admit or accept the fact that I have this problem." That is what is contemplated in this Hebrew word *ra'ah*. Both of these things—*ra'ah*, and *shub*—help us to understand how repentance works. We must understand what we have done as fully as possible. And then we admit our guilt. We admit our sins. God says that we confess them to Him. That is part of the consideration that we must do in order to fully repent. We must accept our status as a sinner. And once we truly comprehend what we have done, and what we are, then we have the motivation to turn, change, and choose to forsake evil, and to pursue all that is good.

This segues very nicely into the New Testament Greek word *metanoia*. The literal meaning of this word is "an afterthought." This might give you an idea now as what the writers of the New Testament—Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, and others—were getting at when they used this word for "repentance." It is an afterthought because, you know, we do not repent **before** we sin. You cannot repent before you sin. That is not repentance.

If we think twice about something, it often causes us to change our mind. They say that "hindsight is 20/20." That saying's idea is also involved here. We can look back and see what we have done, and that makes us change our minds regarding future actions.

And it complements very well with *ra'ah* and *shub*. In many ways, it combines the meanings of the two Hebrew words.

A strict dictionary definition of *metanoia* is, "a change of mind that results in a change of

direction."

It is not just that we change our minds, but that we have to be followed by *shub*—to turn. And it includes both *ra'ah* and *shub*. A change of mind followed by or resulting in a change of direction.

II Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance [*metanoia*].

God is very patient with us. He will work with us for a very long time to bring us to the point that we leave the path that leads to death. From this very verse, we can see (just like we saw in the Days of Unleavened Bread) that repentance is a very long-term process. And, God works with us during this very long-term process. You just do not repent once, and are done with it. No, we keep repenting throughout our Christian lives.

Now as Peter says here, some have taken this to be slackness on God's part; that He lets us linger over such a long time. But Peter says, "This is not slackness, but this is mercy on God's part!" Quick and instant repentance will not endure very long. The kind that lasts for all eternity, the kind of repentance, the kind of change, the kind of turning from the way that leads to death to the way that leads to life is a life-long, deep-down, hard-won, blood, sweat, and-tears type of repentance. We are thinking about it, we are emotional about it, and we are actually doing something about it all of our lives. And it is God's mercy that He allows us to take the time to do it right.

This is the repentance that leads to life—eternal life! This is the repentance that takes us off the path of man and puts us on the path of God where we start acting like, living like, and thinking like God, and having emotions like God—totally following that path of life. That is why we must be of the mind of repenting all the time.

In the narrative, this is right after Christ called Matthew, and they went to Matthew's house. Luke calls him Levi here:

Luke 5:29-30 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And the scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

"Why do you put Yourself in the midst of all these evil people? Won't You be defiled by them?"

Luke 5:31-32 Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Listen to what He says to them: It was His mission to come to this world, to change our minds so that He can change our lives. Remember reading earlier that we have all sinned. We all need this work that Jesus is doing. So, we all need to change our minds so that it results in a change of life.

If you would look again at verse 32, reading it literally, it sounds like some people need repentance while others do not. But let us not read this straight up. Read this with some sarcasm. Remember who He is talking to here. It was the scribes and Pharisees. What He is saying here, coated with a bit of sarcasm, is, "Oh, you're so righteous! You're so much better than these people. Well, I don't need to tell you anything, because you already know it all, don't you ? You have no need of repentance, do you, O righteous ones!"

See? They had not come to the point where they could repent at all! They did not consider themselves to be sinners. But, what Jesus was working with were the ones who knew that they were sinners and needed His help, and wanted His help, and thus Jesus could work with them. But the Pharisees' heart was so hard, they were so entrenched in their own goodness that they had closed their minds even to the suggestion that they had any need to repent. They could not see their own depravity.

Talk about having their blinders on! They did not need The Great Physician. They had no need of Jesus and the repentance that He could bring.

This is something that God had to do in Job's case too. Here, Job is talking with his three friends,

Job 27:1-6 Moreover Job continued his discourse, and said: "As God lives, who has taken away my justice, and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter, as long as my breath is in me, and the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. Far be it from me that I should say you are right; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

not reproach me as long as I live.

What gall! He said exactly the same things here that the Pharisees said as recorded in Luke 5 above. What a hard heart he had! "My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live." Do you see the arrogance there? "I am so good! I will uphold my own integrity."

When Job looked in the mirror, he saw a paragon of virtue. He saw the ultimate in righteousness. This fellow was so righteous that he offered sacrifices for his children, just in case they may have sinned. And as God said, he was blameless and upright. However, if you would look up what those Hebrew words really mean, they say that he stuck to the letter of the law. He did everything to the "jot" and "tittle." No one could accuse him of wrongdoing. He was a good man.

That is true. He was a good man. But, when God looked at Job, He saw something very different. There something we can learn from here.

Job 40:1-4 Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said: "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it." Then Job answered the LORD and said: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.

He is a different person now.

And so God had shown Job what he was really like, even though he had toed the line regarding the letter of the law.

Job 42:1-6 Then Job answered the LORD and said: "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' 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."

Job was now in the *ra'ah* stage, where he actually considers himself and what he has done. Now he had an entirely different take on himself. "Therefore I abhor myself," he

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says, "and repent in dust and ashes."

God led him through this process where God revealed Himself to Job. He did not necessarily reveal Job to himself, but He revealed Himself to Job. This is a very major key to true repentance. Seeing yourself in comparison to God and not to yourself as you were, but seeing yourself in comparison to true perfection.

Here in Baltimore, where I gave the offertory, I talked about counterfeit money. The Treasury officials who are trained to seek out and identify counterfeit money study the true United States currency, knowing it inside and out. Therefore it becomes quite easy for these officials to distinguish the true from the counterfeit.

In a similar fashion, God is saying the same thing to us. If you prepare yourself with the true righteousness that is in God—the True Holiness—you are going to see just how counterfeit you really are! And, you are going to repent because you do not want to be counterfeit. You want to be the true currency—the real deal—authentic. And that true one will be the path into the Kingdom of God, because you are showing God that you have turned from that old evil way and are going to live His way forever.

Notice also that Job said that he repents "in dust and ashes." What does this remind you of? To me, it sort of pictures burial and death. Remember the line, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust"? We must put off that old life of sin that leads to death and be raised to a new life of righteousness. We see that in many places, including Romans 6 in the New Testament. What is interesting to me is that in this entire section, the Greek word *metanoia* is not here at all. Yet, this entire section is, indeed, talking about *metanoia*.

Romans 6:1-14 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? [The subject must be repentance.] Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. [A theme of the Days of Unleavened Bread, is it not?] For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. [He has won!] For the death that He

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died, He died to sin once for all [Passover]; but the life that He lives, He lives to God [which we are to do likewise]. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

We left that road, the road that leads to death.

Now remember that I said very early in this sermon that repentance and righteousness are virtually inseparable. I think that we begin to see the idea. We begin to see how they combine. Without repentance, righteousness has no beginning. We cannot be righteous while we are still on that old path of life that leads to death. It is impossible. We are to turn away from that path, and then begin doing righteousness. And, without righteousness, repentance has no room. There is nothing to show after repentance if we do not do what is right and good. One without the other is nothing. They must be done together.

Matthew 3 is the first occurrence of the word repentance in the New Testament.

Matthew 3:1-3 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.'"

Matthew 3:7-10 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's coming by preaching a message of repentance. He had to do his part in preparing the hearts of the people for the preaching

of righteousness that Jesus was going to do. So, in order for the righteousness to begin to be developed in the people, they first had to repent. They had to be made into good ground for the seed to be planted. They first had to repent. The people of Judea could not hear and accept the teachings of Christ until they had been convicted of their own sins. John the Baptist says here in verse 8 that the way we can prove that this change of heart and life has taken place is when our lives begin to show that we are doing what is right. Like I said, righteousness is the fruit of repentance.

If you think you have repented, but you are still living and walking along your old road leading to death, then you probably have not repented. But you need to, and you should do so. Righteousness is the fruit of repentance. This is why John the Baptist says his statements against the Pharisees and Sadducees. If I can paraphrase it, he says, "You sons of wickedness! Are you coming to me for baptism to save your evil hides because you think that the end is near? Is that why you're coming to see me, to save yourselves? Prove to me and everyone that your lives will truly change once this baptism has taken place. And don't think that Abraham's righteousness will get you anywhere personally," he says. "Abraham's physical descendants are a dime a dozen. And God can raise up stones as children to Abraham if He wants to. Physical descent from Abraham doesn't mean anything—not spiritually, anyway. So, judgment time is on us now, guys," he says, "and whoever fails to live righteously, even though you may have thought you had repented, if you don't show those fruits, you're going to be thrown into the Lake of Fire."

Pretty stiff words, do you not think? What is repentance without righteousness? Nothing. So, how do we repent? We have gone through all this, how do we do it?

Well, Jesus could not show us how to do it. Did you ever think about that? He was our perfect example in how to live, but He could never Himself show us how to repent. He went through baptism as an example, but He had nothing to repent of. So, who do we look to as an example of true repentance?

Well, He left that to "one after His own heart," His own ancestor, David. David's attitude was one of going on to perfection. He was not perfect, but he was always striving to become perfect. And that is what God loved about him so much, that he had a heart that was trying to do what was right. When he slipped and fell, he was humble and teachable, and he repented and moved on.

Obviously, Psalm 51 is David's psalm of repentance. Of course, we do not have time, today, to go through all of this. In fact, whole sermons could be given on this one chapter alone.

Repentance and Righteousness (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

I am going to give you a few highlights—something that you can jot down and look at later in your own personal study during these Days of Unleavened Bread, keying in on the repentance aspects of it.

First of all, David simply puts himself at God's mercy when he asks for forgiveness. He did not try to justify himself. He does not try to explain away his sin at all. He just said, "God, just do what you think is right for me. But, please be merciful."

Second, David confesses his sin—admitting he did them—and does not try to hide himself or hide his sins from God. He just simply confesses his sin.

Third, David acknowledges that his sin is against God, as all sin is. All sin is against God, and the reason for this is because it affects our relationship with Him. Whatever sin we do, we separate ourselves from Him. So, David acknowledges that it is God who he has wronged, primarily. Of course, he wronged others in the process—Bathsheba, Uriah—and caused great distress for the whole nation, but he confessed that his sin was primarily against God.

Fourth, David acknowledges that his entire nature is sinful, and that sin is a fact of humanity and existence. But he also acknowledges that God requires us to overcome it. And the only way that we can do this is with God's help.

Fifth, he acknowledges that he can be cleansed of sin by God, and only by God. He even hints in verse 7 with the use of the word 'hyssop,' which are the herbs used to smear the blood over the doorway on the Passover (Exodus 12:2), that only the sacrifice of the Lamb of God can remit our sins and make Passover the passing-over of our sins possible. By washing in blood, he says, we can be whiter than snow, and it is the blood of the Lamb of God.

Sixth, David asks God to change his heart and to grant him true repentance. Look up Romans 2:4, "The goodness of God leads you to repentance," and II Timothy 2:25, "God grants us repentance." Like I said earlier, it is something that we *must* do, but *cannot* do without God's help. So repentance is an act of God in our lives, as well as our own, to change our heart. We do our part while God does His.

Seventh, he asked for God to renew his Holy Spirit in him. He said, "Please, don't take it away from me! Please don't cast me away from your presence. Help me to overcome this by your power, because by my own power I can't do anything. I need Your power."

Eighth, he asked God to put him back on the path toward the Kingdom of God. He said,

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"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. Please restore me upon that right path to Your kingdom!"

Ninth, he asked God to help him become a good example to others, and to teach them God's way of life as the opportunity arises. So, not only to repent of this sin, but also to pursue righteousness and become a right example to others. And then, become good enough in God's sight to be able to teach other people the truth, not only leading by example.

Tenth, he gives God praise for His goodness and mercy. Do not forget that God has done this only as an act of mercy. And then he acknowledges that the idea is good.

Eleventh, David lets God know that he understands that no physical act will ever atone for his sins. There is nothing he can do to make up for this. What God desires is a change of his mind, and heart. He asks for a humble spirit and attitude that produce a change in the way that he lives. God respects the person who is submissive and willing to change. And no amount of sacrifices will cause it to occur. It is only by an act of God that this will happen.

And twelfth, he asks God to show favor to Zion—in this case the church, the people of God—and he implies, "Please don't let my sin cause others harm. Please don't let what I have done bring dishonor to You, or Your people. Please be merciful, intercede, and intervene so that the effects of my sin don't ripple out to affect others.

And now, as we have been hearing in the sermon series on the sacrifices, with the assurance that God has covered our sins, then our sacrifices and acts of righteousness and love toward God and man can have real meaning. They will show our true devotion to God and man.

Let us conclude in Romans 6.

Romans 6:15-23 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more

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lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We began this sermon considering the slavery and redemption of the Israelites. But like them, we have been redeemed from Egypt, because of sin, a type of the world, but also like them, things that we learned in our slavery—many long years of slavery in some cases—those things are still there. God does not just "hocus pocus" and make all those habits and attitudes and inclinations go away. In a way, they have not all been put out of us. We have been cleansed, sure, from our sins. But, we are still in need of repentance of those things. Cleansing and repentance are not the same thing. He cleanses us by His blood, but we still must turn off that path that leads to death, and start on the path that leads to life.

So, we have a week of Unleavened Bread before us, a week that represents a lifelong process of coming out of sin. It takes time, but it all begins with a deep heartfelt earnest repentance—a change of mind and attitude; a turning to what is right. Then, and only then, can we begin along the road to truly righteous living.