

The Doctrine of Repentance

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The story is told of a famous preacher who was walking with a group of people who were unsaved when one of them asked, "Preacher, when should a man repent?" The preacher calmly replied, "You should be sure you repent on the last day of your life." "But," protested several of the people, "we can never be sure which day will be the last day of our life." The famous preacher smiled and said, "The answer to that problem is very simple. Repent now."

This is exactly what the people within the wicked city of Nineveh did during Jonah's day. They repented of their sin. Can you ever imagine Philadelphia, New York or San Francisco repenting of sin and turning to God for salvation? This is without a doubt the greatest evangelistic campaign that the world has ever known to date.

Jesus said in Matthew 12:41:

"The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

The wicked people of Nineveh had to repent in order to be saved from God's coming judgment. Only eternity will reveal the countless numbers that repented of their sin and were converted in this day. However, Jesus said that these saved people will rise up in judgment to condemn the men of Jesus' day for failing to receive Someone greater than Jonah - the incarnate Son of God. Jesus was their Messiah and he was preaching repentance to the people, but they failed to see the folly and wickedness of their own sin and repent.

Repentance is what God commands every person to do who is lost and headed toward Hell's fire and eternal judgment. They need to repent right now in order to be saved forever from all of God's wrath and future judgment.

Acts 17:30 says:

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”

The Bible clearly and definitely teaches that no man can have the eternal forgiveness of sins and be saved from Hell unless he repents.

Acts 3:19

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...”

Jesus said in Luke 13:3:

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

A person cannot miss this clear point revealed in Scripture. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness of sins or salvation. Only certain judgment awaits the unrepentant sinner. Jesus says, “I tell you...” In other words, Jesus is saying: “What I say I mean. You had better listen or you will be sorry! Without repentance you will be burn in Hell forever.”

2 Peter 3:9 says:

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

There is simply no question about the fact that the Bible teaches one must repent in order to be saved. If you do not repent you will wind up in an eternal Hell without any ray of hope of salvation. The words “perish” in the last two Bible passages has the connotation of spiritual ruin and loss of well being in the coming fires of judgment. Dear friend, unless you repent you stand without any hope at all. Only the misery of an eternal Hell will be your portion. You must repent before it is too late!

The Bible teaches that those who have not repented are building up God’s wrath against themselves for the Great White Throne Judgment, when all of God’s wrath will be poured out upon the hopeless and helpless sinner in the eternal fires of Gehenna.

Romans 2:4-5

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

As sad as it may be for the unrepentant sinner, that’s how glad it is for the repentant sinner. The Bible teaches that all of Heaven is interested in repentance as it relates to a person’s salvation experience.

Luke 15:7,10

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

Repentance is what brings an individual to the place where God can meet him and bless him with so great a salvation. God cannot meet you with His salvation unless you turn to Him in repentance.

Repentance & the Dispensations

There are those theologians who stress that repentance is not for this age today. If that is true, I wonder why the angels rejoice when a sinner repents? And must we erroneously conclude that they only rejoiced in a previous dispensation?

There are also those who teach that repentance is not necessary for salvation because John’s Gospel does not mention the need for repentance. “After all,” they say, “The book of John was given to lead sinners to Christ and the word repentance does not occur.” They claim that John only mentions the word “believe” for this age. People teach this concept because of their misunderstanding about the interrelationship between faith and repentance. We will note this later in our study. Furthermore, they forget that John’s Gospel does mention about John the Baptist who definitely taught repentance (John 1:15). John the Apostle was very familiar with John the Baptist’s message.

John the Baptizer prepared the nation to receive their Messiah through the message of repentance. A lost and unbelieving nation needed to repent and be saved. John the apostle mentions about the life of John the Baptizer because of his key role in bringing the nation back to God through the message of repentance (Matthew 3:1-2).

It would seem absolutely absurd to say that John the apostle did not believe that repentance was necessary for salvation when he himself preached the message of repentance to a lost nation in sin.

Matthew 10:6-7

“But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The disciples actually followed in the footsteps of John the Baptist as they preached the message of repentance for salvation. In fact, they followed in the footsteps of Jesus Himself who taught that repentance was necessary for salvation.

Matthew 4:17

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

If Jesus thought repentance was necessary for salvation and preached it, then I would think that we should preach it as well.

I know there are also those who press the issue about the “gospel of the kingdom.” They claim that this was not the same gospel that we are preaching in our present dispensation; therefore, we should not present the message of repentance with the gospel presentation as John the Baptist did. I have some problems with such conclusions as this. It is true that we are not preaching the arrival of the coming kingdom. This was a particular aspect or emphasis of the gospel in the days of John and Jesus prior to the Great Commission to evangelize the world.

In the dispensation of the grace of God we are not told to evangelize with the message of the soon arrival of the kingdom. We are looking for the rapture and not the kingdom to be established upon earth. Not

until the tribulation begins can people honestly look for the kingdom to be established, which will of course follow the days of the tribulation. Therefore, it's during the future days of the seven-year tribulation period that the gospel with its particular emphasis on the coming kingdom will once again be preached among the masses of lost humanity.

Matthew 24:14

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

The point we must remember is that there is only one gospel! I repeat, there is only one gospel! The word “gospel” means “good news” and always speaks about the good news of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The “gospel of the kingdom” was indeed the gospel of good news about Christ, which was preached to a lost Jewish nation who needed Christ. They needed to hear about the death and resurrection of Christ.

The only difference between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 is that the gospel of the kingdom places an emphasis upon the soon arrival of the coming kingdom. Today, this special feature is not to be joined to the message of the gospel because Jesus is not returning as king for the church.

There is much confusion about this whole matter of the gospel of kingdom and repentance. All I want to stress is that there has always been only one Gospel. There may be an added feature about the coming kingdom joined with the message of the Gospel in order to fit the dispensational period; however, the content of the Gospel (Christ's death and resurrection) will never be changed. If it is changed then it becomes another gospel (Galatians 1:6-7).

John the Baptist did have a unique ministry to the Jewish nation in order to prepare them for the coming Messiah. In one sense, the timing and circumstances of his ministry can never be repeated. However, the message that he preached about repentance can and should be repeated today in order to see people saved.

Speaking about the dispensations, it's equally important to realize that John was commissioned to preach about repentance to a lost and dying world, even after the program of the gospel of the kingdom and Jewish call to repentance was halted. Jesus actually gives His apostles a Great Commission for this age or dispensational period of time that includes repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 24:45-48

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.”

The disciple's eyes were opened to the truth about Messiah's death and resurrection program as seen in the O.T. prophecies (45). They were beginning to understand how the death and resurrection of Christ was the direct fulfillment of these passages. Jewish kingdom truth was now halted (postponed) and Jesus looked out into the harvest of all lost humanity, wanting to get the Gospel out to the entire world. While the disciples began to see how Christ was the fulfillment of all the prophecies; Jesus then gives them a commission or new program to evangelize the world with the message of repentance and the forgiveness of sins through Christ Himself (47). Yes, John the apostle was commissioned to preach repentance to a lost and dying world for this age. The dispensational change has not made repentance unnecessary in our day.

Many people then wonder why John did not directly talk about repentance in the gospel addressed by his name. The answer is that John understood that both faith and repentance are tied together and work hand in hand. You cannot separate the two. They work as a team. They are married together, as we will see. Although they are distinct acts they work together in God's saving program.

Furthermore, it is not the actual spoken word “repentance” that God requires, it is the actual thing of “repentance” that God requires. In other words, it's the act of repentance that is important. In John's book the “word” repentance does not appear but the “thing”

repentance does appear for every person must repent in order to believe.

Once again we must remind ourselves of the plain words of Jesus:

Luke 13:3

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Mark 2:17

“When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Harry Ironside has well said:

“No dispensational distinctions, important as these are in understanding and interpreting God’s ways with man, can alter this truth.”

Repentance - Definition

What does the word repentance really mean? This is where the issue arises. Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that repentance really means penance. This is a great perversion of the truth. One authorized Roman Catechism says:

“Penance is a sacrament in which the sins committed after baptism are forgiven by means of the absolution of the priest. The priest gives a penance after confession that we may satisfy God for the temporal punishment due to our sins. We must accept the penance which the priest gives to us.”

Now what is a penance? A penance is when a person confesses their sin to a Roman Catholic priest and the priest forgives the sin by supposedly making satisfaction for it. Doing penance is the effort of man to bare the punishment for sin and forgive sin. This is a Romish dogma, which is based upon a deceptive paraphrase of the word repentance in the English Bible. The Douay Version is what the Roman Catholic system uses as their Bible. In their Bible (not ours) they translate the word repentance as “doing penance” (Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 9:13 and many other passages). For those who fall into sin after

their baptism, the sacrament of penance is as necessary to salvation as is the baptism of the person. Penance is merely an outward act imposed by a Roman priest, which is supposedly making atonement for sin. It is an open scandal upon the Bible and utter blasphemy to translate repentance as penance. Biblical repentance has nothing at all to do with penance. To think that a man can forgive sin is a damnable practice that is sending multitudes to Hell!

For the Roman Catholic today, repentance has a different meaning. It becomes to them a meritorious act that they must do in order to have forgiveness and salvation. Their action of receiving penance is what keeps them saved. Repentance or penance to them is a “work to perform” (confession to a priest). It becomes a work to perform in order to be saved. This is a wrong concept of repentance because repentance is not a satisfaction rendered to God but an inward change of the heart necessary for salvation (Romans 10:10).

Remember:

“We are not saved for repenting but if we repent.”

There is also the idea that repentance is reformation. Lordship salvation teachers stress that repentance includes the idea of surrender, the outward forsaking of sin and changing your course of action in life. Thus, they conclude that when a person repents in a Biblical sense, they must surrender their whole life to God and change their course in life and become a disciple of Christ. In short, they must outwardly reform their life in order to have true repentance and salvation.

This plays along with their whole scheme of Lordship salvation, which concludes that a person must change their life and become a disciple in order to be genuinely saved and in order to be sure of their salvation. As we will discuss later, repentance has nothing to do with outward reformation. Repentance deals with an inward change of mind. Reformation is what occurs after true Biblical repentance has occurred.

The Lordship salvation teachers have confused the true meaning of this word repentance. What we must do is define Biblical repentance

and then see how the act of repentance fits into God's saving program.

The major Greek word translated repentance basically means "to think differently or reconsider." We could simplify this by saying that the word repentance means "to have a change of mind, attitude or heart." This understanding is seen in the Greek word for repentance ("metanoia"). It's used many times throughout the New Testament and always means a change of mind and attitude. It is essentially a substitution of the old mind for a new mind. It means to think differently or reconsider. The word implies a complete reversal of a person's attitudes and convictions or an inward turning from what they used to believe or think about God, Jesus and themselves. This means that there will always be an inward turning and reversal from sin within the person's heart when true Biblical repentance has occurred. It is only then that a person will seek pardon and cleansing from God.

Inward and Volitional Repentance

A person who truly repents will have an inward change or reversal in their attitude and outlook about God, Jesus Christ and their own sinfulness before God. They will reconsider who God is and what Jesus has done for them and how sinful and vile they are before God Almighty. Always remember that the change occurs inwardly and not outwardly. As we will discover later, true repentance does not involve an outward change in conduct. This is merely the fruit or result of repentance. However, true repentance will always result in a change of life but this change is not to be construed as part of the root or inner repentance of the heart that accompanies the immediate salvation of the soul. True repentance involves a change of heart and mind on the inside. After genuine inner repentance has occurred, the outside conduct of the person's life will follow.

It would seem that both the intellectual and volitional (voluntary or act of the will) element about repentance is attached to this primary Greek word translated repentance ("change of mind"). A person who exhibits a change of mind about sin will many times voluntarily or willingly realize his dreadful, sinful plight before God and turn to Christ and be converted. The volitional or willingness to turn to God

from sin is one part of a person's conversion before God. It involves a total inward willingness and desire to be delivered from the bondage and judgment of sin. There needs to be an inward turning to God from sin or desire for pardon and cleansing (1 Thess. 1:9). These two aspects of repentance (intellectual & volitional) are closely associated with one another and are hard to separate.

Dr. Lehman Strauss has said concerning the volitional aspect of repentance: "Where there is true repentance, the volitional aspect of the act of repentance follows the intellectual and the emotional aspect. While it is true that no man repents until the Holy Spirit moves upon his heart, there can be no repentance where there is unwillingness to turn to God."

Concerning the volitional aspect of repentance, Hendriksen has said: "Conversion, moreover, effects not only the emotions but also the mind and will."

These two aspects of repentance (intellectual & volitional) are closely associated with one another and are hard to separate.

However, one red flag must go up at this point. There are those people who can intellectually repent or change their mind about their sin but never have that inward willing desire to turn to God and be converted. People can repent intellectually but never inwardly turn to God from their sin and desire cleansing. They are like those that Jesus spoke about in John 3:19 when He said, "... and men loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil." He also spoke of them in John 5:40 when He said, "And ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

This type of person never has a real inward attitude or change of mind about their own sinfulness before God and their need to be forgiven. This is why they do not inwardly and willingly repent of their sin, desiring to be cleansed and released from the strongholds of sin within their life. Their will is still overpowered by their love for sin instead of looking at their utter sinfulness before God and their horrible condition before God. A love for sin instead of an inward willingness to turn to God and away from their sin causes many

people to stop short of the Biblical repentance which brings salvation into a person's life.

A man may change his mind about his sin before God and still not turn to God in conversion. They may be nothing more than an "Almost thou persuadest me" Christian like king Agrippa (Acts 26:28). In other words, some people do not voluntarily or willingly make it their purpose to see their sin as a stench in God's nostrils or something that is offensive to Him and desire forgiveness and pardon for their sin. The intellectual aspect of repentance may be present but not the volitional part of repentance. There may be no inward turning from sin or desire for pardon and cleansing. Such examples of this type of intellectual understanding of sin might be Pharaoh (Exodus 9:27); Balaam (Numbers 22:34); Achan (Joshua 7:20); King Saul (1 Samuel 15:24) and Judas (Matthew 27:4).

Allow me to say at this point that many theologians and teachers stress that the volitional (voluntary) aspect of repentance is when a person actually takes the outward action to turn away from their sin and forsake sin. However, this seems rather misleading when one comes to the realization that repentance itself is not the act of reformation or outward change. Change is what follows the act of repentance. This will be explained later in more detail. Genuine Biblical repentance, according to the Greek word "metanoia," is an inward change of attitude and mind or a new internal conviction about what one used to believe about God, Jesus, salvation and their own sin before God.

Emery Bancroft has rightly observed:
Repentance ... is wholly an inward act, not to be confounded with the change of life that proceeds from it."

Mark G. Cambron has also observed:
"Repentance is wholly an inward act of the mind. To many people it means to turn away from their sins, but if that were so, this would be reformation.

True repentance is not an outward change in behavior but an inward change in a person's belief system.

This means that true “metanoia” or repentance must also involve the inward voluntary act of the human mind and will to reverse the sin problem within their life, because of personal hatred for sin and because of sin’s horrible blackness in God’s sight. Intellectual repentance informs the mind, but those who desire pardon have experienced that melting of the heart, which alone can cause a person to turn to God and be converted. When this type of repentance occurs in an individual’s heart they have volitionally or voluntarily turned to God for salvation and are converted.

Now imagine yourself witnessing to an unsaved individual at the grocery store. He asks you the crucial questions, “Must I give up chewing tobacco in order to go to Heaven? Must I give up my love affair? Must I quit going to the bar to have a drink with the buddies?”

How would you answer them? What would you say to them? You might in good humor say this. “You don’t have to stop chewing tobacco to go to Heaven but you will have to go to hell to spit!”

Of course, the proper answer is this: “You do not have to give up any sin in order to be saved and go to Heaven, but you will not want to be saved and become a Christian until you repent or change your mind about your sin.” This is the best answer that you could give to a person like this. No person must give up their sin in order to be saved, but they will not want to be saved until they change their mind about their sin and willingly desire pardon and freedom from their sin! Of course, when true repentance or this inward change of attitude does occur it will result in overall godly living. This is the fruit of repentance.

The point is this. When people ask questions like these, it will only prove that godly sorrow has not been working in the heart and that no genuine repentance has established itself within his heart. This is because genuine repentance involves a new attitude about sin. It’s not the attitude of the person above, which desires to keep on sinning because he loves his sin. Sin becomes horrible to the one who is repenting and will bring a person to the place where he will want to turn to God and forsake those sins, which are horrible in God’s eyes. We must simply understand that if a person does not change his attitude or mind about his sin and voluntarily desire cleansing, pardon

and freedom from sin, then true repentance has not occurred in his heart and this person does not want the salvation that Jesus offers.

When a person is not broken over their sin, when they are not willing to inwardly surrender and be freed from their own sin, it's because they have not yet had a change of attitude or mind about their sin. And when a man is not ready to repent or have a different attitude about his sin before God then he will not get saved. When a person genuinely repents, he will voluntarily change his mind or have a different conviction or attitude about his sinful life and turn to God for salvation. He will have a whole new outlook and way of thinking about his sin. He will experience a voluntary reversal and an inward surrender toward God. These inward attitudes are all part of this change of mind and heart concerning his sinful condition before the presence of a holy God. This is why the person who loves their sin will not repent. When you love your sin and want to continue in your sin, then it goes to prove that you have not had a change of attitude about your sin.

We must also remember that there is a vast difference between an inward change of attitude and heart about sin and the actual need or requirement to forsake sin in order to be saved. Lordship Salvation teachers simply confuse genuine repentance and make it become a synonym for outward submission and forsaking of sins. It is the root of repentance (inward change of mind and attitude about sin) that leads to salvation. It is not the fruit or outward result of repentance that is needed in order to be saved.

The root of repentance deals with the inward change of mind or a different heart attitude about sin and the way of salvation. However, it does not involve the fruit or outward change of life. This aspect of repentance follows salvation, as we will see later.

When a person genuinely repents, they will change their mind about certain things and have a different conviction or attitude about certain spiritual matters as they turn to God for salvation. They will have a whole new way of thinking, a reversal and inward change of heart about many spiritual things. The Biblical context will help us to determine what people are to repent or change their heart about. In

other words, the context will determine what the object of repentance is.

In true Biblical repentance a person will have a change of mind and attitude about several matters:

1. A person will have a change of mind about God.

Acts 20:21

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Many people have a wrong concept of God today. Repentance toward God has to do with changing your mind about God. For instance, if a person believes that God is merely an idol, or some kind of New Age spirit, they must change their mind about His being and recognize that He is the true and living God and the only invisible creator of the universe. An individual must have a right view of God. There must be a reversal of a person’s concept about God.

They may have believed certain things about God that are not true. They may have always believed that God overlooks sin and is not concerned with righteousness or that God is only a terrible judge without any mercy or grace. People need to repent or change their mind about who God is and what He is like. He is the true and living God that demands righteousness and yet provides grace and salvation to His creation. He is the God who cannot excuse your sin.

Acts 17:23-30 says:

“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For

in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

These heathen people needed to repent or change their mind about God as being the only true God (24) who is full of grace (27). They needed to repent about their many false gods and view the true God correctly. They needed to have a change of mind and a whole new outlook on God's being, existence and grace.

2. A person will have a change of mind about their own sinfulness before God (Acts 8:2; Revelation 2:21-22, 9:20-22, 16:11).

In these verses we also discover that repentance is linked with a person's sinful condition before God. You cannot be saved unless you change your mind or attitude about your own rotten self. You must develop a different attitude about your sin. There must be the exercise of the mind in regard to the sins of your life.

This is expressed by the words of David in Psalms 51:3-4:
"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

David's confession within his Christian life demonstrates that he was truly repentant. His confession resulted from his repentant heart. Every repentant sinner, whether saved or unsaved, will acknowledge before God their own sinfulness and desire cleansing from their sin. This is the true nature of all genuine repentance.

This is also expressed by the words of the prodigal:

Luke 15:18

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee."

A person must recognize that they are a terrible sinner before God's presence and unworthy of His saving grace. They must have a different outlook and reversal of attitude about their life of sin. Repentance is the sinner seeing himself as God sees him – a terrible sinner that has offended God's holiness. It's the job of the Holy Spirit to convict a lost world about their sin (John 16:8) so the individual can repent or alter his opinion of himself and reduce the estimate of his own character before God. In genuine repentance there is a holy horror for sin and holy hatred for sin.

It has been observed that among the many thousands of English words, the three most difficult to repeat are "I was wrong." And yet the sinner who is truly repentant will come to the place where he will say these three words, "I was wrong." He must change his attitude about his sin and admit to God that He was completely wrong in the manner in which he lived and realize that he is totally unrighteous and a sinner in God's eyes (Romans 3:10, 23).

Many lost sinners take a light view of sin. In their own minds, sin is not so serious. But the Bible views sin as that which is hideous and a stench in the nostrils of God. It separates humans from God. So a lost soul must take on a different attitude about his sin or he will never be saved.

Repentance is a whole new attitude or change of mind about a person's sinful condition and plight before God. A person must come to the realization that they are utterly sinful and detestable in God's sight as a sinner. They must alter their opinion of themselves and see themselves as unworthy and rotten sinners who are fit for a burning Hell. Romans 3:20 and Luke 15:17-18 explain how a man will experience a "knowledge" about his own sin before God and be deeply burdened by the very fact of his sin before God.

Arthur W. Pink has said:

"Thus, genuine and saving repentance is a taking sides with God against myself."

This certainly goes against the grain of human nature and the modern teaching of self-esteem, which personifies man as valuable in God's sight and Jesus as dying for worthy people. It has gotten so bad that

certain men are saying that we should never call any person a sinner, because we will damage their self-esteem or worth. God help us! Do you realize that a person will go to Hell unless they repent or change their mind and attitude about their dreadful sinfulness before God! The Holy Spirit is seeking to convict lost people and alter the sinner's good opinion of himself. A lost person must come down to their level and see themselves as a worthless and hopeless cause before a God who is full of grace and mercy.

We have multitudes of unrepentant sinners sitting in church pews today who think that they are pretty good and that God will accept them in spite of their little misfortunes in life or their little faults. I've got news for you, God will damn your soul into an eternal Hell if you do not change your whole mind and attitude about your condition before God.

Repentance involves a person waking up to the fact that he is totally corrupt before God's presence and that he is totally unrighteous in His sight. Repentance is the deathblow to self-esteem, psychology and the whole concept that man is rather fantastic and marvelous in God's sight. Man is a dreadfully lost sinner in God's sight and needs to wake up and change his mind about his sinful plight before God before he can ever be saved. Repentance is a person's recognition of his need for God's saving grace! Repentance paves the way for a person to receive the offer of free grace.

I once heard a man talking on Christian radio. He said that he never realized that he was a sinner until after he was saved. My immediate reaction to that statement is that this man could not be saved unless he first repented of his sin and realized that he was a dreadful and despicable sinner before God's presence.

Self-judgment (not self-concept) is the work of repentance taking place in the heart of a person.

3. A person will have a change of mind about their own human work works.

Hebrews 6:1 is often a misunderstood passage. However, it does prove this point about repentance: "Therefore leaving the principles of

the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.”

The Hebrew believers were reminded about the “dead works” of the Mosaic Law by which no person could ever be saved. These no doubt have reference to the blood of bulls and goats that could not take away sin or impart spiritual life (see 9:13-14). Repentance in the Old Testament was centered on the Old Covenant of blood (“dead works”). Repentance today is centered on the New Covenant of blood – the shed blood of Christ.

The tendency was to try and gain God’s favor through continuing to sacrifice the Old Testament animals. The sacrificial law, when viewed in this way, was like a bunch of “dead works” that were incapable of bringing salvation into a person’s life. Like the rituals of the Old Testament sacrifices, our works have no life or ability to save or rescue us.

The application of all of this for today would be that a person must repent of his legalistic works within his own life, those works which they are trusting in and depending upon for salvation. Many people today are trusting in their own human sacrifices to bring salvation into their lives. As a general rule, mankind is of the opinion that works save a person. This false theory is instilled in the minds of multitudes today. Modern man believes that if he lives well enough and jumps high enough that God will save him in the end. Many people have the concept that God is grading on a curve and that they will make it to Heaven because their good works outweigh their bad works. But God says that all of our works are “dead works” when it comes to saving us.

Like the rituals of the Old Testament sacrifices, our works have no life or ability to save or rescue us. That is why we need to repent of these works. We need to come to the place where we have a new mindset and attitude (change of mind) about our own works in life. We must agree with what the Bible says about them. They are dead and filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). We need to repent about our own efforts to save ourselves and develop a new spiritual attitude and outlook toward the only way to be saved. This brings me to the next point:

4. A person will have a change of mind about the person and work of Jesus Christ as the only answer for his salvation.

Acts 2:38 says:

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

The context of Acts 2:38 would indicate that the Jewish audience needed to have a change of mind and heart about who Jesus Christ really was (22-24,36). He was the true Messiah and God that they had crucified. These people needed to repent of their failure to see Christ as God and their need for His salvation. They needed to have a new change of heart about Jesus Christ. They needed to see Him as God and the only Savior of their soul, who alone could forgive their sins and make them right before God (36,38).

Until a person is ready to change their mind about who Jesus Christ is (God) and what He can do for them (save their lost soul), they cannot be saved. That is why Jesus was so adamant about His own person (Mark 8:27; John 8:24) and work upon the cross (John 3:14-16).

Repentance is a necessary part in God’s saving program. Unless an individual experiences a real change of mind about God, Jesus Christ and his own sinfulness, which separates him from God, he cannot and will not be saved. Repentance will bring a man to his knees through the act of inward surrender as he changes his mind about his own sinful way before God. He will realize that his ship is sinking and he is in it! He will also agree that Christ is the only answer for his salvation (Acts 4:12).

Emotional Element of Repentance

There is also a separate element connected with repentance that is emotional. This means that there will be a certain moving of the soul and sorrow over the sin that occurs in one’s life before they repent in a Biblical sense. As we will see, sorrow works in connection with repentance, but is not repentance in and of itself.

Dr. Lehman Strauss has said:

“We are not saved by our feelings, but neither do our feelings remain dead and senseless when we are saved.”

Dr. Ironside has said:

“The very first evidence of awakening grace is dissatisfaction with one’s self and self-effort and a longing for deliverance from the chains of sin that have bound the soul.”

“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream,
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him.
This He gives you,
Tis the Spirit’s rising beam.”

When a person truly repents he will change his mind because his heart has already been convicted, stirred and troubled by sin. A man’s heart must simply become broken before God before true repentance can occur. This means that there is not only a change of mind but also a change of heart or emotional response that must first occur when someone truly repents.

Matthew 21:28-29

“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented (grieved), and went.”

Matthew 21:32

“For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented (grieved) not afterward, that ye might believe him.”

The word repent in these verses is the Greek word “metamellomai” which means “to care afterwards, to regret or feel remorseful.” It points to the remorseful and heartfelt conviction that precedes repentance. I like to view this aspect of grief as the seed or spawning ground that allows repentance to take place. Although the word is translated repentance in the English Bible, it is a different word that

means remorse or grief. In our present verses (28-29), we have both the seed of repentance (“grief”) and the fruit of repentance (“went”). Both the seed and the fruit are the before and after of repentance but not the actual root of repentance.

The seed and fruit do not make up what the Bible normally defines as repentance (“a change of mind”) but they do precede and follow Biblical repentance. In other words, what precedes and comes after is not the actual act of repentance. Grief simply prepares for repentance to take place and fruit comes after repentance has occurred. In between the seed and the fruit is where the root of real repentance occurs, which involves a change of mind. If a person will make this distinction they will be saved from much confusion.

It is true that when one is repenting, they do have deep remorse over their sin. However, this remorse is created before the act of repentance begins and is always seen in connection with the change of mind and attitude about a person’s sin and unworthiness before God. God simply begins to stir the heart of a person about their terrible sin before His sight. Their heart becomes heavy and weighed down with the horrible character of their sin before God’s holy presence. This in return leads to a whole different attitude about their sin and they voluntarily turn to God.

Luke 18:13

“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”

This is real inward repentance that is occurring within this man’s heart, because of a deep sense of sorrow over his own sinful condition before God. He could no longer stand his sinful condition in the light of God’s holiness and wrath.

One man told me that he could no longer sleep at night for fear that he would die in his sleep and wake up in Hell! His heart was weighed down and terrified at the sin in his own life and his need to be made right before God. When sorrow like this occurs within the heart of a lost soul, they are ready to change their mind about God, Christ, salvation, their own sin before God and voluntarily turn to God in the

act of Biblical repentance. Sorrow for sin results from the conviction of the Holy Spirit and becomes the spawning ground for Biblical repentance to take place.

The primary Greek word (“metanoia”) translated repentance means to have a change of mind or new attitude about God, Jesus Christ, your own sin and your need for salvation. Grief is the seed that germinates this repentance and fruit is the result that comes after this repentance.

“Grief” (sorrow) and “fruit” (a change of life) are not the actual repentance, but the two cooperate with repentance and cannot be separated from its design and outcome. That is why when a person repents about their sin there is a certain sorrow connected with the fact that they are sinners before God’s presence. Grief or sorrow has paved the way for repentance to occur and continues to affect their heart as they repent before God. This is also why a change of life follows repentance

There needs to be a genuine change in a person’s emotional response when he recognizes how sinful and terrible he is in God’s sight. When the lights come on and the bad news about his condition before God is known, the man’s heart will become crushed. It will become deeply burdened down by the weight of sin and produce real grief and sadness in his life.

Acts 2:37-38

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

As Peter was preaching to the lost Jews who had crucified the Lord, they suddenly realized their enormous sin. Their crime came bursting upon their heart and they realized the terrible position in which they stood. The Bible says that they were “pricked in their heart.” This means that their heart went through an emotional change. The blackness of their own sin crushed their heart and stirred them to take action. What kind of action did they take? The action of repenting of

their sin in order to be saved and become a part of the New Testament church.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 7:10:

“For godly sorrow (grief) worketh repentance (change of mind) to salvation not to be repented (regretted) of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”

There are different degrees of sorrow in different people. However, the Bible seems to teach that there must be enough sorrow that leads to genuine repentance, where ones whole mind and attitude are changed about their sin and they voluntarily turn to God. This in return will result in their “salvation” or deliverance from sin. The emotional element in repentance may not always be seen outwardly. There may not be a single tear shed outwardly. However, if the tears do not flow down the cheeks they will surely flow within the heart. Sorrow works in direct connection with repentance.

It’s sorrow working with repentance that makes repenting more than just an intellectual encounter with sin. It makes repentance a time of heartfelt mourning and sadness.

James 4:9 speaks of this grief aspect tied to repentance:

“Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.”

A very touching incident recorded in the Bible has always expressed this element of sorrow, which works along side of repentance.

Luke 7:37-38 reveals the touching scene of godly sorrow:

“And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”

Here is a woman who came into the presence of the Lord Jesus and was waiting to see whether or not He would accept her. After sensing His love and acceptance for her, she fell before His feet and washed

them in her tears of sorrow and wiped them with her own hair. This was all a sign that the godly sorrow of repentance was working in her heart. In fact, this lady repented and expressed faith in the Messiah as her Savior (Luke 7:50).

Sorrow is what precedes (though not part) of true Biblical repentance. Sorrow works in direct connection with repentance. There will always be a certain element of sorrow over sin and remorse for what you have done and how you are living. When people claim to be repentant but express no remorse or regret for the way that they are living, then they have not repented. The reason is because God makes the heart sorrow through inner conviction before repentance can occur.

It's only after repentance is complete that the sorrow, which works in connection with repentance, can be turned into joy!

Isaiah 51:11

“Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”

Second Corinthians 7:9 states the same truth about the sorrow that works in connection with repentance: “Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.”

In other words, a person's heart must be stirred and grieved about their sinful condition before God in order for repentance to occur. This conviction over sin and sorrow produced by God (“godly sorrow”) can lead to a person's repentance. A person experiencing godly sorrow will realize that they are a sinful soul before God, be heavily convicted about their sin, know that they are worthy of His judgment and ultimately turn to God in repentance. This in return will lead to their “salvation” (deliverance) from their sinful past (2 Cor. 7:10). This is true both in the Christian life and with the unsaved individual. These verses portray deliverance in the Christian life.

In this passage (2 Cor. 7:9-10), sorrow is viewed as something separate from repentance, although it is something that works directly in connection with repentance. Some have concluded by this that sorrow itself has nothing to do with repentance and can be misleading when we try to link sorrow with repentance. However, that would do an injustice to those passages which closely link sorrow and mourning with the act of repentance (Psalms 51:1-2; 2 Cor. 7:9-19; James 4:9; Zach.12:10; Matt. 24:30) .

What the Bible seems to suggest both here and elsewhere is that sorrow is the seed of repentance. Sorrow is the spawning ground for genuine repentance to be born within the heart. As we have already stated, there is both the seed of repentance (grief or sorrow) and the fruit of repentance (change of life).

What Paul is suggesting in Corinthians is that there is a sorrow that works directly alongside of repentance and will result in genuine repentance, which is a change of mind and attitude about a person's life of sin and separation from God. One leads into the other. There is a change of heart that results in a change of mind about your sinful condition before God.

Grief or sorrow leads to repentance and you cannot have real repentance without the heart first being stirred and moved about sin. In fact the actual order of the Greek in verse 10 reads, "grief repentance to salvation works". This actually suggests that grief works in connection with repentance and is needful in spawning real repentance. It is separate and yet a needful starting point for Biblical repentance to occur. Sorrow for sin will produce the volitional aspect of repentance, which is the actual inward, desire to turn to God from the strongholds of sin and be saved.

To regret or have grief after a "godly manner" (9), "godly sorrow" (10) and "godly sort" (11) means that a person will experience grief over the actual sins that they have committed in life. This grief or sorrow results from the inner conviction of God and is thus called godly sorrow. The person convicted and grieved about their sin realizes that God is speaking to him, and so he changes his mind (repents) and takes sides with God against himself and against his sin. The ultimate

result is that he receives “deliverance” from his sins and experiences a new change of life.

Conviction and stirring of the heart (change of heart) always precedes a change of mind. God must first touch the heart before He can touch the mind, attitude and life of a person. There is a true stirring of the heart and sorrow attached with repentance that cannot be overlooked. One leads into the other. Sorrow leads into true repentance. God first begins to speak to the heart about a person’s sin, his relationship before God and about his desperate need for salvation. Only after this has occurred can true repentance really take place. There must first be this inward stirring of the heart (“godly sorrow”) before repentance and salvation can occur.

On the other hand, the “sorrow of the world” (2 Cor. 7:10) is not godly remorse that leads to genuine repentance or that aspect of repentance which causes a person to change his mind about sin and turn to God. Worldly sorrow or grief means that a person will be sorry for the consequences that their sins have brought into their lives. They will have regret for what they must reap because of their sins.

The person with the sorrow of the world is not sorry for their actual sins, which they have committed, but for the adverse results that are brought into their life because of those sins. They are also grieved because they may have been caught in their sin instead of getting away with their own fleshly way. In other words, if the sinner’s sin was never discovered and there was no possibility of his sin being publicized and punished, he probably would not be sorry for it.

The flip side of the emotional element working with and along side of repentance is that there can also be a very real tendency to have a deep emotional stir that never does lead to genuine repentance. Regret itself may not necessarily lead into repentance. Once again, we must wave the red flag in order to arouse our attention and send a word of warning. Not all tears lead to genuine repentance! You can shed tears that will fill three buckets and truly not be repentant.

The old-time mourners bench philosophy was that repentance was merely mourning over your sin and waiting a certain duration of time before you are ready to receive salvation. This of course is a false

view of repentance. It views repentance as merely a mourning ceremony that is trying to get God's attention and coaxing God into giving you salvation because you are full of remorse. Remorse itself does not save you. There must be a change of mind and inward turning to God away from sin.

There is also a difference between attrition and contrition. Attrition does not lead to Biblical repentance. Attrition is when a person only fears about God's judgment and intellectually believes in a God that will save him from that judgment. They may shed tears of fear about judgment but not tears of sorrow over their sin and horrible state before a holy God. Attrition does not produce real repentance.

Contrition, on the other hand, does produce true Biblical repentance. This is a deep sense of sorrow and remorse, which comes from a person's awareness of their own sinful condition before God. This is the kind of heart that leads to true Biblical repentance. Contrition is the seed from which repentance grows.

David is the perfect example of someone who had a genuine sorrow for the sin that he committed in God's sight. His sorrow was coupled with genuine repentance. In Psalm 51:17 he says:

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Judas, on the other hand, is a prime example of a remorseful person that did not have genuine sorrow. Judas was not sorry about the results, which his sin brought to the Lord Jesus. He was remorseful because of the terrible harvest, which he himself reaped from it. He was also sorry that he was caught in the act of sin. His sorrow did not grow into repentance.

Matthew 27:3 records the attitude of Judas:

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders."

You will notice several things about this repentance of Judas. First, it was only after Judas saw that he was in the frying pan that he

repented. Second, the Bible says that he “repented himself” and not to God for salvation. Third, the word for repentance in this verse is “metamellomai,” which means to regret or have grief. Judas did not express genuine repentance or change his mind about his actions and life. Rather, he regretted that he was in such a predicament and that he had to face his sin head on. Fourth, Judas went out and committed suicide and died. Second Corinthians 7:10 says “the sorrow of the world worketh death.” Such was the case in the life of Judas.

Remember Esau? The Bible says that Esau was emotionally stirred because he had lost the birthright blessing. What does the Bible say about him?

Hebrews 12:17

“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

Esau was not weeping about his sin of giving up the birthright for the gratification of one meal. He wasn't weeping about his sin at all. He was weeping because he was a loser! He tried to get his father to change his mind (repent) about the whole account, but it was too late. All the tears of Esau were deceptive and manipulative. They were designed to express grief for the loss of something and the desire to get it back. There was no grief over his actual sin.

They have a name for these kinds of tears. They are called crocodile tears. They are not tears that are created because of a person's deep awareness of their own sin before God. Rather, they are tears that flow down the cheeks because of remorse over one's predicament in life and their own hardships, which sin has caused them. The child, fearing the paddle, cries, “I'm sorry, please don't spank me!” Of course the child is sorry many times because he is going to get an old fashioned whipping. That is why he is crying crocodile tears.

“It is not thy tears of repentance or prayers,
But the blood that atones for the soul:
On Him then, who shed it thou mayest at once
Thy weight of iniquities roll.”

I think this should send a word of warning to us about great emotional appeals today, where people are stirred up and they shed tears over saddening stories and plays or dramas. Many people have emotional responses to flashy displays and programs, but never really repent and place faith in Christ. The Gospel is not made clear and everything is merely an emotional appeal for people to make some kind of change in their life or take some kind of action.

Many people who were deeply stirred, filled with alarm and moved to tears are now in Hell! The reason is because they never possessed a godly sorrow or conviction over sin, which brought true repentance into their heart. They merely had an emotional stir over something, which they saw or were asked to do.

Lordship Salvation & Repentance

Now what is the real issue at hand? Lordship salvation teachers stress that repentance, which leads to salvation, is actually when the sinner determines to outwardly follow Christ by surrendering his whole life to God and when he promises God that he will outwardly change his life forever. In other words, they stress that repentance is when a person actually decides to outwardly give up his sins, stop sinning and change his lifestyle so that God might accept him as being truly repentant. They promote the false gospel that says every sin in the poor sinner's life must be outwardly forsaken before they can place genuine faith in Christ. This is called a "faith that works" and without this kind of working faith there can be no salvation. In one sense, when the sinner is presented with the Gospel, he must bargain with God by promising to God that he will give up all of his known sins so that he might have real faith in Christ when he receives God's offer of grace. This is an incredible hoax on the free offer of grace (Romans 3:24).

In promoting this fallacy in the Gospel presentation, a man's works becomes inseparably tied to the act of faith alone in Christ alone. Reformation is tied together with faith. And only when people decide to outwardly follow Jesus Christ and promise to forsake all of their sins can they really know that they are saved by their act of genuine faith in Christ. In summary, Lordship salvation teaches that a person must turn their entire future life over to Jesus as Lord or Master. This

is done by outwardly forsaking all of their known sins and promising to follow Jesus all the days of their lives. When their sin is forsaken and their eyes are fixed upon the goal to follow Jesus for their entire lives as His disciple, it's only then that they can receive the forgiveness of sins and salvation.

The term "Lord" is presented to poor lost people in the Gospel presentation in order to tell them that they must make a commitment to outwardly surrender their entire lives to Jesus and make Jesus their personal Master or Lord. They are then told that this is done through their commitment to outwardly forsake all of their known sins and reform their ways. Thus, they are told that they must offer something to God on the bargain table. In doing this, Lordship Salvation goes beyond trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior. It includes the teaching that we must promise to obey and practice obedience to Jesus as Lord or Master as a condition for genuine faith to occur and in order to receive eternal life. It is the teaching that a lost sinner must promise to become a committed disciple or follower of Christ in order to be saved. This is the basic teaching of Lordship Salvation.

This concept teaches that the repentance which leads to salvation is really a matter of reformation. You should start waving another red flag when someone starts relating repentance to the act of reformation. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Repentance and reformation are not the same thing. Reformation is that attempt to do something in order to change your life. It involves a definite act to quit something within your life and refine your life in order for God to accept you or be pleased with your life. When one interprets repentance as meaning reformation (outward change), then they begin to stress a works salvation or disciple\mastery salvation, which is nothing more than works in disguise!

The problem is that the Lordship salvation teachers are confusing the root of repentance with the fruit of repentance. You cannot have the fruit before the root! In other words, the Bible teaches that genuine repentance for salvation is an inward change of heart, mind and attitude about God, Jesus Christ, salvation and your sinful self. This is what is actually needed to bring salvation into a person's life. It is not the promise to God that we will outwardly forsake every known sin in

our lives so that God will think that our faith is genuine and that we are now worthy to be accepted before Him as a faithful disciple or servant.

Outward change is not the root or core teaching about repentance. Having to outwardly turn from your sin is not real repentance. Many imply that repentance is actually a change in one's conduct or life, whereby a person must give up all of their sins and change their life in order to be saved. It's the old evangelistic "turn or burn" idea. But is it really true? If we must actually turn away from all of our sins or forsake all of our sins in order to be saved, then would we ever really be saved? Furthermore, how could we ever have the assurance that we are saved? This is the problem with Lordship Salvation and Reformed Theology.

Let me say it in a clearer fashion. Biblical repentance does not imply a change of a person's outward conduct or the alteration of lifestyle. The root of biblical repentance does not require a change in conduct or action. The change in conduct and action are the results of Biblical repentance. A change of life is what follows repentance. The Bible calls the change of life or that which follows repentance – "fruit." This is brought out in our next point.

For an in-depth study of Lordship Salvation, please see the author's studies entitled "The Errors of Lordship Salvation" and "Lordship Salvation." These studies present the history and errors involved with this type of Gospel presentation.

The Root & Fruit of Repentance

Matthew 3:8

"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

The fruit speaks of the change in direction and manner of living that should occur after Biblical repentance has occurred. Repentance itself is not the fruit, but that which follows repentance is the fruit.

Acts 26:20

"But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that

they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”

Once again we see that works, fruit or a change of life is what follows repentance. The outcome of all genuine repentance is a change in direction. There will be the actual turning from sin and change in the course of one’s life. Now remember, this is the result of repentance. Both the Old and New Testament echo this same truth about what occurs after genuine repentance has taken place. The change of life is the result or what follows repentance. This is true for all repentance, whether it is repentance within the Christian life or repentance for the lost sinner that needs salvation.

Ezekiel 18:30

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”

Ezekiel 14:6

“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.”

Revelation 2:5

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”

In all of these verses we see that a change of life is closely linked with repentance. This is because the actual forsaking of sin occurs after genuine repentance has occurred. Only after a man has changed his mind and attitude about God, sin and the Savior can he really be saved and change his manner of conduct or living.

We must then conclude that repentance itself is not a change in behavior but a change in a person’s belief system. Repentance is a change in our belief system about God, Christ, the true way of salvation, and about our sinful condition. It has nothing to do with changing our pattern of living. Repentance does not point to a change

in our pattern of living but a reprogramming of our mind concerning the spiritual things of sin, salvation and the Savior.

God does not require the fruit or result of repentance as part of His actual saving program. The fruit or results of repentance follow salvation and come after repentance has actually occurred. The classic illustration of repentance in the Bible proves this simple point.

Jesus said in Matthew 21:28-46:

“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.”

Here we observe that after genuine repentance has occurred there will be a change within a person's life. There is going to be a change in the course of a person's life. This is the fruit or result of repentance. One changed and another did not, which demonstrates that one did not have real repentance in the first place. One had fruit but the other did not.

What many people are doing today is confusing the root with the fruit! This is where the real confusion lies. Lordship salvation teachers are claiming that one must repent (change their life) in order to become a Christian. They must forsake all known sin and promise to follow God all the days of their life or they have not repented and will not be saved. They have confused the fruit of repentance with the root of repentance.

Any gardener knows that you must first plant the seed before you get the root. Then from the root or out of the root comes a vegetable that is full of life, color and taste. So it is with repentance. You have the before and after of repentance. You have the seed (godly sorrow), which comes before any repentance can occur, then you have the root or main system being born (repentance – an inner change of mind and attitude). After this the fruit or vegetable follows (the change of life). Between these two (the seed and fruit) is the root or birth of what real repentance is all about. It is the root, which is the core of repentance. The fruit is what follows.

In his commentary on Luke 3:8, Lenski has rightly observed: "...repentance cannot be meant by fruits..." "Fruits indicate an organic connection between themselves and repentance just as the tree brings forth the fruit that is peculiar to its nature...(repentance) is invisible; hence we judge its presence by the ...(fruits), which are visible."

This is a good scriptural observation. Lenski is saying that the fruit of repentance can be seen as the resulting act of repentance. Furthermore, we can judge that genuine repentance has occurred when a person practices the resulting fruit, which flows from a repentant heart. The fruit of repentance is not to be viewed as part of the root but a direct result of the root of repentance. Sometimes this root and fruit of repentance are joined together so we can see the initial act of repentance with its inevitable result.

Acts 26:20 seems to place the person's saving response to the Gospel and the result of the salvation of the sinner all in one verse.

"But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet (fitting, suitable, congruous) for repentance."

- Repent = change your mind about God, sin and your need for salvation through Christ.
- Turn to God = this speaks of conversion, where the sinner actually desires the salvation which Christ offers and willingly or voluntarily turns to God for salvation through repentance and faith.
- Works meet (suitable or proper) for repentance = that which follows repentance.

It very important to see the order that exists between turning to God through the act of repentance and then that which follows repentance – works. The Bible is saying here that a person repents in order to turn to God and be converted.

Acts 3:19 also says:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

This turning to God is actually an inner act of conversion that takes place when a sinner repents and desires to turn away from sin. There needs to be this inward turning away from sin and the desire to rid your life of sin, which has been such a terrible bondage to your life. There is this inward decision to turn to God and be forgiven of the sin that bars you from God’s favor and salvation. When the Bible says to “repent and turn to God” or “repent and be converted” (Acts 3:19) it is teaching that a person must have a change of mind about God, Jesus Christ, salvation and their own sin before God. It is also teaching that people must voluntarily decide to turn to God and away from their sin through the act of repentance in order to be saved. When true repentance occurs in the heart of a person, they will be converted. The act of turning to God is the act of conversion, whereby the repentant sinner is saved.

However, you will notice what comes after genuine repentance has occurred. After repentance has occurred comes the works and change of life. Acts 26:20 says that those works which are (“meet”) fitting to the act of repentance are what follow the conversion experience before God (“do works meet for repentance”). In other words, works are what come after repentance and conversion has occurred. The works are what follows the volitional aspect of repentance, which is to willingly desire to turn to God from the sin in your life. The order is extremely important to recognize in these verses, especially Acts 26:20 (“repent,” “turn to God,” “do works”).

First Thessalonians 1:9 is a similar verse to illustrate the saving response of a person to God: “For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

- Turned to God from idols = conversion, the voluntary decision to turn to God for salvation through the inner act of repentance and faith.

- To serve the living God = the transformation or outward change that takes place after salvation or conversion. No more will they serve idols. Now they will serve God.

Once again, we see how the act of genuine repentance involves this turning to God or conversion or this inward desire to turn away from sin in the life. A person must repent by turning away from their love for sin within their heart. Only then can they truly turn to God for salvation or be converted. Remember that conversion is the actual point when an individual decides to turn to God for salvation and away from their sin, which has long held them in bondage.

Please carefully note what the Scriptures are not saying and then what they are saying. The Bible does not say that these people turned from their sin to God. This would imply that they were outwardly doing something in order to gain or merit their salvation. These people did not have to try to forsake every known sin in their lives and give up all kinds of wicked idolatrous ways in order to become a Christian. The Bible actually says that they turned to God from their sin. Their response was toward God, who alone can bring salvation into their lives. Outwardly forsaking idols would not save their souls, but turning to God would bring salvation into their lives. The outward forsaking of idols will come after their saving response to God.

Paul says that these lost sinners first of all turned to God from idols. This means that they willingly or voluntarily decided to turn to God for salvation. And when they decided to turn to God for salvation they inwardly (in their own hearts) turned from idols. The thought of turning from idols is included with the act of conversion because it accurately portrays a repentant heart that has changed its mind and heart about sin. Furthermore, a person will not inwardly turn to God from sin without wanting to outwardly change his life.

People must inwardly repent to God of their sinful ways and have their hearts broken over sin. This inward repentance or change of mind and brokedness over sin is likened to turning from idols. There was a given point in time when these people responded to God in both repentance and faith to complete the turning act before God. These people had an inward desire to no longer live in their sin

before the presence of a holy God. They desired to turn to God for salvation and away from idols in their act of conversion. This means that in their own hearts their sin became despicable and horrible as they contemplated the holiness of God and His hatred toward all sin. They changed their mind and attitude about their sin in God's sight and inwardly turned away from the sin that they for so long had loved and enjoyed. These people were then saved because of their inward turning to God and their inward turning away from sin through the act of genuine heartfelt repentance.

True Biblical repentance, which leads to conversion, always includes the inward desire to change and place yourself under the authority of Jesus Christ in a new living relationship. But there is a vast difference between the inward surrender connected with repentance and the need for outward change and conformity in order to be saved. In the repentance and subsequent conversion of these people, we see that they ultimately would turn away from their outward idolatrous sins that for so long had wrecked and ruined their lives. This outward turning was the fruit of repentance.

We must remember that this "turning to God and from sin" is really one inward act that happens simultaneously in order to bring salvation into the life. However, we must also remember that people may seek to turn from their sin outwardly and try to reform themselves and stop without turning to God for salvation. Lordship Salvation stresses that people must outwardly turn from their sin in order to possess real faith that saves. This is no different from a person trying to reform his life. To confuse the root of true repentance (the inward desire to change) with reformation (the outward change) is a dangerous matter that will breed confusion in the hearts of the lost.

I was talking to a man about salvation. I asked him if he ever really was saved. The response of this man to this question was that he made a conscious decision to never hit his wife again. According to him, his salvation was based upon his act of reformation. He simply felt it was wrong to hit his wife and his refusal to no longer strike his wife would mean that God would be pleased with him and save him. However, this man never realized the dreadfulness of his own sin before a holy God and his need to turn to God for salvation from eternal damnation.

He never saw his sin as a dreadful stench in the nostrils of God. Many want to outwardly reform their ways but not inwardly repent of their sin to God and turn to God for salvation.

Many are also confused how repentance works in connection with saving faith. Sometimes the Bible only mentions repentance as the requirement for salvation (Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). Other times it only speaks about faith as the requirement for salvation (Eph. 2:8, John 3:16; Romans 4:3). In light of this, we must conclude that when a person repents they also must believe and when a person believes they must also repent.

Does that sound confusing to you? Think about it. When repentance occurs alone it must include the idea of faith. And when faith occurs alone it must include the idea of repentance. Repentance and faith are married. The two cannot be separated in their work of bringing salvation into the heart of a lost sinner, but they need to be distinguished from each other as distinct acts! They surely cannot be separated when it comes to the salvation of a person. Both are needed as a response from a lost sinner in order to be saved.

The fact of the matter is that both repentance and faith, though distinct acts, can occur at the same time as the sinner responds to the Savior. Let's stop and consider what faith is for a moment and then tie it together with repentance.

Repentance involves a change of mind from unbelief to belief about God, Christ, salvation, your lost condition before God and about your own dreadful sin. However, faith is the act of simple trust, reliance or belief in Christ.

You can see how the two are interrelated and cannot be separated. You can see how they work together to bring about conversion. Repentance brings about a change in your old belief system and faith in Christ brings you into the saving benefits of the new belief system.

J. Dwight Pentecost has written something about the interrelationship of repentance and faith: "The point to be observed is this: repentance is a change of mind toward the revealed truth of the Word of God. Previously a man disbelieved the truth; and he has changed his mind

and now accepts or believes the revealed truth, so that faith and repentance, on occasion, seem to be used interchangeably.”

We might say that repentance is a change from a person’s old belief system to a new belief system concerning God, Christ, salvation and their sin. Thus, we can see how repentance and faith must be distinguished, but at the same time they are linked together in order to bring about a person’s conversion. One compliments the other. Repentance is needed in order for a person to change their mind and attitude about their old belief system and bring them to the point where they can now believe in Christ for salvation. This is why you cannot have one without the other.

Repentance does precede faith every time they are mentioned together in the Bible (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 20:21). However, repentance is seen to work in harmony with faith, which results in the salvation of the lost sinner. There is so much harmony, inner relationship and working between the two that they even appear together in the same passages (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 20:21).

Harry Ironside has well stated:

“Faith is what springs from a divinely wrought conviction of sin which produces repentance that is sincere and genuine.”

In other words, faith is the result of genuine repentance taking place in the heart. There can be no mistake about this Biblical truth. Repentance paves the way for faith to follow. Repentance opens up the door for faith to walk through.

Acts 20:21

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Repentance and faith work together as a baseball team would. Every batter takes their turn to hit. There is an order in the line up and their plate appearance. Likewise, there is a divine order in repentance and faith. Repentance comes to the plate first. Repentance is the lead off batter and gets a hit. After the lead off batter, comes the next hitter, called faith. The first batter (repentance) gets on base and the next batter (faith) does its job as well. Together they round the bases and

bring an individual toward the home plate, which is likened to the act of conversion or the act of turning to God. Then the runner actually crosses home plate and scores. The score is salvation!

It would seem that both the message about repentance and faith can be brought before the lost sinner in order to bring salvation into their life. This is because every lost individual needs to first repent of their wrong view about God, their own system of works, their sinful condition, and their need for salvation through Christ. They must first change their mind from unbelief to belief. When doing this they will be ready to place saving faith in Christ, knowing that they are lost and in need of His salvation. In one sense, repentance paves the way for faith to occur and opens up the door for faith to take place within the heart. This is why the Scriptural order is repentance before faith (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 20:21).

Repentance may be viewed as changing your mind about God, Christ, salvation and your sin. However, faith is viewed as trusting Christ for your salvation. Together they bring a sinner to the point of Biblical conversion (see 1 Thess. 1:9). You must change your mind and attitude before you can trust Him for salvation.

Acts 9:35

“And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.”

Matthew 18:3

“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted (turned about), and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Remember that the turning process (conversion) occurs when the person has the inward desire to turn to God and away from their sin. This act of turning or conversion is when an individual actually repents and believes on Christ. Both are included in the act of turning.

Sometimes belief (faith) is seen as the turning point to God.

Acts 11:21

“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”

Sometimes repentance is seen as the turning point to God.

Acts 3:19 says:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted (turned about), that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”

We simply must understand that both repentance and belief have an important role in the turning process of the heart to God. We must also remember that this is all an inward turning or desire to God for salvation and an inward turning away from the sin that you once loved and cherished.

Well, we must understand that we have been talking about the intricate workings of what takes place when a person repents and believes on the Lord Jesus as Savior.

Let us remember that repentance opens the door for faith to occur. When the change of mind takes place, only then can faith be placed in the person and work of Christ. However, to preach either the message of repentance or faith to a sinner will get the same result, which is salvation. This is because the act of repentance is always included with the act of faith and the act of faith is included with the act of repentance.

When a person truly believes they must also out of necessity repent. Likewise, when a person truly repents, they must also out of necessity believe on Christ. This is because the two are interrelated and work together. The job (salvation) will not get done without both of them working together. If one is fired from the job of salvation then the other one will have to be fired as well! Faith includes repentance and repentance includes faith.

In a similar fashion, the whole act of conversion (when the sinner turns to God) cannot be separated from repentance and faith. This is because the two (repentance & faith) is what is involved in the act of

conversion (Acts 3:19, 28:27; John 12:40). Repentance and faith are but two different sides of the same act of turning. Together they produce conversion, which in return brings regeneration into the life. There are some things in Scripture, which can be distinguished but not separated. This is because they work together. The same could be said of the soul and spirit. They should be distinguished and yet they cannot be totally separated for they work together.

I like to picture repentance and faith as a married man and woman walking down the street holding hands. Later they put their arms around each other and hug one another. Then later you find them kissing one another as they are standing on the bridge! May I say that repentance and faith kiss one another in the Bible and God's plan of salvation.

Repentance kisses faith and faith kisses repentance and the two cannot be separated. When one act is done the other act is done as well. They are linked together and cannot be separated, though distinguished. They are like opposite sides of the same coin.

Once again Harry Ironside has said:

"There can be no faith without repentance, and no repentance without faith. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

When I was a boy I used to enjoy (and still do) those large lollypops with the tootsie roll in the center of them. After you would get your shot at the doctor, you would be expecting to receive one of those good lollypops. Well, you would be licking away at that lollypop and finally get to the center where the tootsie roll was. Do you remember how good it was when you finally reached the center? Now that may be one way to look at the whole matter of repentance and faith. Repentance leads to faith and the two are on the same stick. If you take away one from the other then the whole lollypop is a flop. Who really wants a lollypop without a tootsie roll!

Go ahead and believe!

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..."

And when you believe, you will have already repented (changed your mind) about God, Christ, salvation and your sin, or else you would not

believe on Christ for salvation. You would see no need to trust in Christ if you did not first repent in your heart.

Go ahead and repent!

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

You had better repent according to what Jesus said! However, when you repent about your sinful condition before God and your need for salvation, the hand of your heart will already be reaching out to Christ in faith or belief. You will find yourself turning to God for salvation, believing in the person and work of Christ to bring you salvation. After all, repentance is really changing your mind from unbelief to belief about your sin and need for salvation through Christ. That is why it is linked with faith in the act of conversion. One leads into the other.

You just cannot get away from repentance or faith. You can preach either repentance or faith to this lost generation and either one will get the same result of salvation. This is because repentance and faith work together and are what every individual person must do in order to turn to God for salvation. One overlaps the other in a sinner's response to the Savior and both result in the salvation of your soul. Both direct the sinner to the Savior by their message.

Man has always been saved only one way down through the ages of time. Salvation has always been by the grace of God. This grace is lavishly poured upon the sinner who turns to Him. This turning to God is seen in the act of repentance or faith, the two being interwoven together into an inseparable union.

The conclusions: When you preach repentance you will in essence be preaching faith. When you preach faith, you will in essence be preaching repentance. That is what John the Baptist realized. He had a two-fold message to the people of his day. They were really one and the same. There was first an eschatological message of repentance, which dealt with salvation in relationship to the coming kingdom.

Matthew 3:2

“Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

But John also had a message of faith:

John 1:29 records:

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Yes, both are true and part of the sinner’s response in order to receive the gift of salvation. You must repent and behold in faith the Lamb of God. One overlaps the other and both get the same result. They are not a different message but the same message with the same results. When you repent you have faith in Christ. When you believe on Christ you will repent or have a change of belief. Likewise, after you repent and believe you will have a change in your life and entire manner of living. Someone has said it this way, “Never the same!”

At an open-air Gospel meeting the preacher asked for testimonies. While this was going on a skeptic was passing by just when the testimony of a saved drunkard was being given. He stopped and listened. The former drunkard was telling how he had repented of his sin and how Jesus had wrought a miracle and saved his poor soul.

The skeptic scoffingly made a few remarks to those standing near him. He said, “It is nothing more than a dream. It’s all a dream to think of a man repenting to God and God saving him in this manner. It’s all just a mere dream, and nothing more.” No one answered him; but God had His way of dealing with the skeptic.

Among the listeners was a little girl about ten years old. She had known the misery of a drunkard’s home, a drunkard who had gone without repentance before God. She heard the remark of the skeptic and, going up to him, she said: “Please, sir, if it is only a dream, please don’t wake him – for that’s my daddy who is talking up there!” Yes indeed. Repentance saves a man and changes a man forever! That is why there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repents!

The Means of Repentance

In the next portion of our study on repentance, we need to have some understanding about the way repentance is produced within the heart of an individual. When we talk about the means of repentance we are referring to the instruments or agencies used to produce repentance in the heart. Some will be very extreme with their Calvinistic dogma at this point. We know that God is the person who produces repentance within the heart of lost people; however, the individual still has the opportunity to voluntarily repent or refuse to repent.

Acts 5:31

“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

Acts 11:18

“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

2 Timothy 2:24

“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

The true Calvinist has long used these verses to support his theory that repentance is a gift to only the elect and that God in His sovereignty has chosen only the elect to have repentance. Therefore, He creates repentance within their heart when He decides to save them, without any volitional or voluntary act on the part of man. This is viewed as a work of grace, whereby God repents for the individual without any active will being exercised on the part of the sinner. This same view is taken concerning the act of belief or faith.

It is true that repentance is a gift. However we must qualify what we mean by that statement. To say that repentance is only a gift to a select group of people is pressing the meaning of these Scriptures.

Acts 5:31

“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

Acts 5:31 portrays repentance as being given to the entire nation of Israel, who Peter was reprimanding for their crucifixion of the Messiah (5:30). Certainly not all of Israel would repent and be saved as a result of Peter's preaching. However, God in His own grace and in His own way was willing to reach out to an entire nation who had just crucified His Son and grant repentance to them. This does not mean God would systematically plant repentance within the heart of everybody in Israel. What it does mean is that God would reach out to them as a nation and bring conviction upon their hearts about their terrible sin. This inner conviction (Acts 2:37) would in return produce repentance in the hearts of many within the nation. It's not that God was favoring some people over others and giving repentance as a gift to only a certain select group of people within Israel. Rather, it means that God was reaching out to the masses of Jews in order to bring conviction into their lives about their sin, which in return will produce real repentance toward God. When it comes to poor lost souls, God has no favorites.

Acts 11:18

"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

This verse is not suggesting that God grants faith to only a select group of people within the races of Gentile humanity. Peter was using the keys of the kingdom to unlock the Gospel to all of the races of Gentile humanity. This verse has a real dispensational significance attached to it. It is suggesting that God is turning from His saving program that was once exclusively designed for the Jews to His program of the church, where both Jews and Gentiles would be brought together into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The Hebrew Christians recognized that God had turned to the Gentiles in a gracious way, allowing them to repent and become part of God's new saving program. He was now willing to reach out to them with a new program of salvation that would incorporate them into the blessings with the Jews, which began on Pentecost (see 11:15). God had now turned to the Gentiles dispensationally, allowing them to repent and be part of the program of the church. The repentance that God granted them was a gift in a dispensational way

or manner. God had turned to them allowing them to repent and become part of the new program – the church.

This verse is not suggesting that God gave repentance to only a select few Gentiles and that there would be no more Gentiles to follow in their footsteps. It suggests that God was now reaching out to the Gentiles in a new way providing repentance for this great mass of people. How God produces this repentance is not really in the forefront of this verse. God was simply going to grant repentance to the Gentiles for a new dispensational purpose and plan.

We must simply understand the way in which repentance is viewed as a gift in Scripture. The repentance, which God gives, is not to be viewed as some selective gift, whereby God grants repentance only to the elect. We see that God grants the gift of repentance to the masses of humanity and not to a select group of people exclusively. Repentance is actually a gift that God produces within the heart through His inner conviction of sin, which goes out to the whole world.

God does act first. If there is ever going to be a spiritual awakening within the heart or change within our heart; God is going to have to bring the change about through His inner convicting, convincing and compelling work. Without God reaching out to the lost sinner, we would have no chance to be saved.

John 16:8 says:

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

The gift of repentance seems to point to the godly conviction and sorrow that God produces in the heart of the sinner, which in return leads the sinner to repentance. It's a gift that is only realized and received when the sinner voluntarily turns to God in conversion. In giving this gift, God does not override the will of the person. The will of man is open to either receive or reject the gracious offer of salvation through God's inner conviction and wooing to Himself.

2 Timothy 2:25 is another verse that has been toyed with over the years and has been used by the Calvinistic as proof for selective and elective repentance. “In meekness instructing those that oppose

themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth”

This particular verse is actually referring to the child of God or a believer who has fallen into the Devil’s trap through some false teaching. When brethren fall into false teaching they must be treated with gentleness, humility and Christian love (24-25a) in the hope that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil (vs.26).

The goal is to allow God to get a hold of their heart and produce repentance within their heart (25b). Unless God grabs hold of their heart there is no hope for their spiritual recovery from false teaching. God can produce repentance within the heart of this person as He does with all people (saved and unsaved alike) by bringing inner conviction into their heart about their sin and error in life.

Once again, we see that God must act first and bring the spiritual awakening and inner conviction to the heart. He does this of course through Timothy’s clear teaching of the Word of God. God uses the clear teaching of truth to create this inner conviction within the heart and grant the gift of repentance to people.

In this case the brother would have to repent about his sin of false teaching that he was following and perhaps propagating. When the erring brother repents about his false teaching, only then can he acknowledge the truth of Scripture once again and be Biblical directed and Biblically based in the truth of God’s Word. His repentance would then become a “repentance unto the acknowledging of the truth.” In other words, he would repent of his wrong teaching and begin to follow right teaching again.

Some have suggested that God may be unwilling to give repentance to this man because he may not be one of the elect. However, this is not the case at all. God is willing to grant forgiveness to any person (saved or unsaved) if they themselves are willing to respond to His inner conviction and leading upon the heart. The fact of the matter is that many individuals are so entrenched in their error that it is actually hard for them to listen to truth, which God is trying to bring to their attention. For this simple reason the Bible says, “peradventure” or

perhaps God will grant them repentance. When a person's heart is hardened to truth only God can soften it and make a change in their heart. However, God will not override the stubborn will. That is why God may not be able to do His marvelous work of producing repentance in their heart.

John 5:40

“And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”

God's gift of repentance, which He works in the heart of the sinner through inner conviction, can be refused by the hardness and stubbornness of the heart. God begins the work in the heart by conviction, but He will not complete that work of grace unless the sinner is willing to respond to the conviction of the Lord upon His heart and turn to God through the act of repentance. There is no such thing as irresistible grace as the Calvinist contends. However, the Bible does teach that there is “awakening grace” which God alone brings upon the heart.

Allow me to quote Dr. Lehman Strauss on this subject:

“God will never coerce us. While it is true that no man repents until the Holy Spirit moves upon his heart, there can be no repentance where there is unwillingness to turn to God.”

Romans 2:5

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

It is amazing how much God has done to bring repentance into a man's heart. Well, God has done everything! He has done everything but override a man's will. God first seeks us so we in return can seek Him and turn to Him through His inner enlightenment (John 1:4-5), conviction and direction. But God will not save you unless you give Him your will. This is what conversion is all about! You must turn to God. That is why the Bible says:

Isaiah 55:6

“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”

Many persist in their sins after all that God has done for them and all the goodness He has shown to them. A Biblical saying can be written after the lives of multitudes of people today – “And they repented not” (Revelation 16:9).

This brings us to our last portion of study on repentance. There are several instruments or means that God uses to produce repentance within the heart of people.

1. There is the instrument of God’s goodness.

Romans 2:4

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

The “goodness of God” speaks of God’s willingness to act and bring repentance and salvation into our life. If it were not for the goodness of His own grace, we would all be hopelessly lost forever. None of us would ever want to repent or turn to God for salvation if God in His own goodness would not take the initiative to stir our heart and call us unto Himself.

“Forbearance” speaks of God holding back His immediate judgment. Rather than destroying every person the moment he or she sins, God graciously holds back His judgment (see Acts 17:30). God saves sinners in a physical and temporal way from what they deserve so that they might come to Him and receive salvation. This is God’s forbearance. Where would we be if God did not willingly express His grace and love to us by holding back His judgment upon our lives? God had the right to send every person to Hell as soon as they were conceived within the womb, because at that point they became sinners before His holy presence (Psalms 51:5). If it were not for God’s tremendous grace, we would all be in Hell right now suffering the vengeance of a righteous God!

“Longsuffering” is really God’s patience toward those people who have not yet repented and are still lost in their sin. Peter talks about

this same longsuffering that God demonstrates before a spiritually lost and dying world.

2 Peter 3:9

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

I am glad that God was patient toward me! Many of us did not respond to Christ or turn to God and His offer of salvation the first time we were convicted of our sin. That is why God is so patient or longsuffering to a world lost in sin. He stands by in grace, waiting patiently for us to respond to Him!

The Calvinist clearly teaches that God only chose certain people to be saved and that God would only give repentance to those that He already decided to save. Likewise, the ardent Calvinist believes that God actually does the repenting for the lost individual and that the response of the person is all of God's choosing. Man is only a robot or puppet in the hands of God.

We might add at this point that if God picked a certain number of people to be saved and decided to only save that particular group of people through automatically producing repentance for them, then God would not have to really demonstrate patience. All God would have to do is place repentance within the heart of His elect and then save them, since He decreed to save them. However, God has implanted a free will within every person to respond in conversion to His actions upon the soul or this awakening grace. This is why God patiently waits upon an unbelieving world to respond to His offer of salvation. He patiently waits for the heart of any man to turn to Him and His offer of salvation. Although God knows who will ultimately turn to Him, He patiently waits to see the heart of people respond to His convicting work upon their life.

Remember: Just because man has a free will to respond to God's work upon the heart, does not imply that there is a spark of “divine life” already implanted within the lost sinner's heart.

These three words joined together in Romans 2:4 (goodness, forbearance, longsuffering), speak of God's common grace, meaning the way that God demonstrates His grace to all mankind. God's grace was seen even before we were saved in that He withheld His impending judgment upon our life and was patiently waiting for our voluntary response of repentance to His offer of salvation. In fact, the grace of God is seen because He was first willing to act upon our heart and create the conviction and sorrow of sin within our own heart (John 16:8). God's goodness upon our life is demonstrated by these acts of His grace. These demonstrations of His marvelous grace would in return lead to our opportunity to repent and be saved.

However, we must once again remind ourselves that the very next verse reveals that God's rich grace can be ignored and rejected.

Romans 2:5 says:

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

The word "hardness" means to be calloused, obstinate and stubborn to God's offer of salvation. Furthermore, we can become "impenitent or unrepentant toward God. The result is that God's wrath will start piling up against us as we create a large storehouse of sins. These will be the very sins that God will bring against us and judge us with at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:12).

It's only through the inward conviction that God gives that we can repent and be saved. As we have already observed, God produces a godly sorrow in our heart concerning our sinful and dreadful condition before Himself (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). This is something that God does. God must act first and only then can we volitionally or voluntarily repent and turn to God for His salvation. If God would never bring conviction into our life and produce sorrow within our heart, then we would never repent and be saved.

The point is that the goodness of God leads (not drags) us to repentance. God in His grace is seen to be good because He not only acts first to bring conviction into our life, but He also is forbearing and

longsuffering to a world lost in sin. These are the very ways that God leads lost people to the place of Biblical repentance.

Dr. Strauss has once again remarked:

“But how men have abused and misused the goodness of the Lord! They have taken advantage of it and have even used it as an excuse for neglecting and rejecting Him.”

I think Dr. Strauss has in mind the idea that many people have today. People say today, “God will wait and give me another chance.” Well, that may be true, but how many chances will God give you before your heart becomes harder toward His offer of salvation? Furthermore, how many days do you have left on earth before you die and are swept into eternity? These are questions that you cannot answer. This is why God commands you to repent right now (Acts 17:30).

2. There is the instrument of the Word of God.

God uses the Word of God to produce repentance within the heart of lost people. This was the case on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-37,38,41). When Peter preached to these lost Jews about their sin of crucifying the Messiah, they became convicted about their sin. This in return produced the gift of repentance in their heart. This demonstrates that preaching on sin and explaining to the sinner their sinfulness before God is needed today in order to see people repent and get saved. Through the use of the Bible lost sinners repent and get saved. God’s Word produce repentance.

The message of the Gospel itself will produce repentance in the heart. Peter spoke about the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:23,31). He shared the message of the Gospel with these people and they were convicted about their sin and repented. The Gospel message is all about Christ taking our own sin upon Himself. This portrays man as a sinner who is responsible for Christ’s death. It was our own personal sins that He bore on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). This brings the sin issue right out into the open and exposes the sinner for what he really is. The death of Jesus Christ brings the skeletons out of the closet and exposes man as a dreadful sinner, a sinner for whom Christ died.

3. There is the instrument of God's chastening hand.

This of course deals with God chastening his child who is already saved. For those of us who know Christ, we are told that God will chasten us and discipline our lives when we are doing something that we should not be doing. God has a way of getting the attention of His own.

Revelation 3:19 reveals this truth to us as Christians today:
"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

God chastens His own children in order to break them and produce repentance within their heart (Hebrews 12:6). We have all felt the chastening hand of God upon our lives. Sometimes God spans His own children rather hard in order to wake them up and produce repentance within their heart.

4. There is the instrument of a Christian brother's correction.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

We have already studied these verses in connection with the gift of repentance. However, it is easy to conclude that Timothy's gentle, humble, and servant-like approach to these people who need repentance can result in their repentance. The humble approach of a brother coming to another brother or unbeliever for that matter can result in repentance taking place within their heart. The way we approach people is very important. As we seek to give people truth in a loving and gentle way, we will see more results.

James 5:20

“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

How we respond to people may determine the actual time when God decides to work repentance within their heart. This should cause all of us who know the Lord to be gentle and kind as we deal with people about their sin and their need for salvation. Our gentle and patient attitude toward people may give us time to share Christ with them. This may then be the turning point where God begins to accomplish His work of conviction and producing repentance within their heart. Remember that there is nothing stronger than gentleness.