

BE MORE

"...BECAUSE GREATER IS HE THAT IS IN YOU, THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD." 1 JOHN 4:4B

Summer Series

Subject: The Fruits of Righteousness – 6 - Repentance

Text: Philippians 1:11

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God”.

Among the many fruits of righteousness, the fruit of repentance is one of those areas that causes the believer much personal pain. At best, we are quick to tell those who are unsaved to repent and be baptized. But what about those of us who repented and have been baptized? Do we believe that since the initial time we repented and said ‘yes’ to Jesus Christ that we never have to repent again? For most believers the response is ‘yes’. The ‘yes’ response is not with our mouths, but many times it is demonstrated in our lifestyle.

Let’s go back to the basics! The word repent simply means change of mind, to think differently and to reconsider. One of the first steps to salvation is repentance; the changing of the mind. Our mind was at enmity or war with God.

James 4:4

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Coming into a relationship with Christ meant we had to change our mind regarding our connection to the world and desire a connection with Jesus the Christ. Maturing in our relationship with Jesus requires us to walk in the Spirit. According to the Apostle Paul, this life of walking in the spirit requires that we do not walk after the flesh.

Romans 8:5-7

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

There are two different Greek words for carnal:

- *Sarkikos* which means pertaining to flesh and unregenerate (Romans 7:14)
- *Sarx* which means flesh (as stripped of the skin) (Romans 8:7)

The first meaning reflects the time before one comes into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The second meaning reflects the time after one has said 'yes' to Jesus Christ and is seeking to reattach or return to the old lifestyle. To this end, Paul told the church at Rome 'to be carnally minded is death and the carnal mind is enmity against God'.

The message for the saints is for us to change our mind (again) back to the mindset that brought us to Jesus in the first place. Please note that the Apostle Paul did not organize the church at Rome and this was his first time addressing them. Therefore, Paul needed to make sure they were grounded in solid faith. So, when you read the Book of Romans, please remind yourself that he was addressing persons who had already given their hearts to Jesus.

Paul begins to close his letter to the Romans with this plea:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2

The message is simple, yet we struggle with its simplicity. We must repent from conforming to the world's standards after we said 'yes' to Jesus (conversion). In the life of a disciple and not just a believer, we are challenged to fight against going back to old or new mindsets that are not reflective of the Mind of Jesus.

Let's push this point a step further. True repentance is changing of the mind, thinking differently or reconsidering (period). Many of us are guilty of repenting with an excuse, explanation or justification of why we did what we did. Have you ever had someone apologize for what they did and offer an excuse, explanation or justification at the same time? 'I am sorry for what I did but...' The strength of the apology has been weakened by the conjunction 'but'. As saints, we act the same way when it comes down to the fruit of righteousness call repentance. We admit our wrong, but we do it with a great deal of stuff attached to it. God says to us, 'Just change your mind without justifying what lead you to the sin or who caused you to comply or compromise'. God asked Adam and Eve, "Who told you that you were naked"? (God did not pause for them to answer.). God immediately asked them another question, "Have you eaten from the tree whereof I commanded you not to eat of"? One does not need a degree in theology to understand that the question required a 'yes' or 'no' answer (Genesis 3:8-12). However, Adam immediately blamed Eve.

This is the point I want you to remember. Repentance is a solid changing of the mind, thinking differently and reconsidering. The job of the enemy is to make us water down our change of mind by justifying what we did. Please understand that it may be important to go into why we did what we did but the message of repentance must stand by itself. John and Jesus shared the same message, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:1-2 &4:17) How much time do we waste trying to make ourselves and others understand why we did what we did? The answer is too much time.

Let's spend less time on why and more time on the change of mind. Why? As we change our mindset, our actions will follow suit. "As a man thinks in his heart so is he". How do I nurture the fruit of righteousness called repentance in my life? Paul told Timothy how to bring it out in others which is also applicable to each one of us.

2 Timothy 2:25-26

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 must operate in:

1. Meekness

Meekness means humility. We cannot come to repentance in arrogance or with a haughty spirit. We must keep ourselves under subjection so that we do not allow our flesh to make us feel like our change of mind is somehow benefiting God. How many times have we said, 'If it wasn't for God, I would still do...'? The aim of God is not to hold us back for the sake of His pleasure but it is for our well being. Now, some of us do not mean the above statement to be arrogant. And yet, I wish to admonish us to be careful when we use the aforementioned statement. We never want to give the impression that we are doing God a favor.

2. Strong Fellowship

Paul wanted Timothy to be careful how he handled those who needed to come to repentance. Meekness should not be interpreted as weakness. Paul said, 'in meekness, instructing ...' This means while I am handling you gingerly, I will give strong words of direction. Meekness, which is a posture, must give direction which is an action. One's posture in God must be that of humility and at the same time one must not be so frigid that you fall apart when given instructions. Weak fellowship will prohibit one from coming into true repentance. We must seek out strong persons who can help position us to hear from the Lord.

3. Clarity

Please note what Paul said, 'In meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves...'

Paul did not say those who opposed him or them but he said those who opposed themselves. The purpose of repentance is to get you back to your original God-self (true alignment). When God made us, He did so with a certain purpose in mind. When we allow sin, situations and stuff to guide our minds away from God's original design for our lives, we end up living frustrating lives. We must seek clarity regarding our destiny in life. Repentance says I am clear that my real battle is with myself. Therefore, I do not place the blame on others for my struggles.

4. The Word of God

We will nurture repentance in our lives when we acknowledge the truth. The Word of God is truth. We come to real repentance because we say what God's Word has said about our lives. The more of God's Word I know, the more repentance becomes real to me. Most of us live our lives by the standards of parents, family members, friends, society, saints and even enemies. The real standard is the Word of God. We believe if enough people are saying it and doing it, then it must be okay. This is the trick of the devil. We must read the Word of God and compare our lives to it daily.

What is your prayer of repentance? Write your prayer of repentance.
