

Repentance

If one desires to have a true fellowship with God, live daily in the newness of life and bear the sweet aroma of Christ amid a world full of corruption, he will surely face two powers which will oppose him:

- An outer power

This refers to the world and all things in it which oppose the life in Christ.

- An inner power

This refers to the inner corruption of the human nature

These two powers are like pumps which unceasingly pour darkness and corruption in man. Man thus becomes like an open vessel in which the ways, mind and logic of the world are being poured. He often responds to this opposition with fear and inner struggle; and thus becomes a prisoner of human laws and circumstances.

Therefore, the man of God needs *to continuously empty himself* of the world, its darkness, and the corruption of the fallen nature. At the same time, he needs *to be filled anew* with the spiritual light which illuminates and renews his mind and with the stream of eternal life which makes him realize that he is a stranger to the earth and the laws of natural life because he has the mind of Christ (1Corinthians 2: 16). According to the original Greek language of the New Testament, the word used for '*repentance*' is '*Metanoia*', that is, changing one's mind. Practically, this is a process of constant emptying of darkness and corruption on the one hand and constant renewed filling with the light and eternal life on the other hand.

One should learn to be vigilant and watchful over himself, observing any sins or unclean motives which may creep inside him even without noticing. He needs to constantly pray saying: '*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if*

there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting' (Psalm 139: 23, 24). The more he does this, the more he advances in the spiritual walk, grows in grace, and grows in knowing God to become on the image of His Son.

This is true repentance. It is not merely asking for forgiveness regarding external situations or wrong acts by saying: *'forgive me, Lord, because I have saddened such and such a person; have acted in a wrong way; or have neglected prayer.'* True repentance is to see the hidden motives inside oneself and the inner response regarding these wrong situations –the response which one may not see but the Holy Spirit sees and desires to purify.

We may succeed in observing our external behavior and in behaving appropriately from outside. However, God knows our inner motives and it is through His light alone that we can see these motives and discern them. As a result, we would be purified of them if we so desire and if we surrender to the Holy Spirit allowing Him to perform this inner purification. This purification extends throughout man's life; it grants him spiritual sensitivity not only towards sins, but even towards errors and secret faults: *'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults'* (Psalm 19: 12).

If one truly succeeds in the process of emptying himself of the world and the inner corruption, he receives true filling: *'to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God'* (Ephesians 3: 19). This filling is without limits: *'for God does not give the Spirit by measure'* (John 3: 34).

We need to develop and acquire daily repentance in our practical spiritual life. We need to specify time for that at the end of each day, for example, where we spend time with God examining and reviewing ourselves, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit to reveal to us our inner selves. We need to listen to His voice and conviction without justifying ourselves or putting the blame on others. At the same time, we should not allow ourselves to have a sense of guilt or give in to negative sorrow. This is because both responses will not benefit us in anyway and may actually imprison us and hinder our move forward. Therefore, we should be positive in our repentance. We need to learn to shake off immediately and listen

to the voice of the Holy Spirit regarding the steps of correction which He may wish to lead us in like apologizing or correcting a certain situation in a certain way, for example.

Repentance is a dynamic act which is full of life, holy stubbornness, and the desire to change. It is also full of holy fear and trembling and holy zeal. Yet, we have mingled repentance with sorrow and emotional responses which actually hinder us rather than help us.

In this context, let us remind ourselves with the golden verses which Apostle Paul wrote about this matter:

'For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter' (2Corinthians 7: 11, 12).

If one observes this true and positive repentance daily, in a humble spirit before the Lord, he will acquire spiritual sensitivity; he will have an open spring of repentance which attracts the Spirit of God to him. As a result, he will not need to wait for his daily time of reviewing himself to repent of his wrong thoughts and deeds, but he will repent instantaneously as the situation is happening. This is because he will then have acquired a tender sensitive heart like the heart of David, a heart which strikes him whenever he sins. When David cut Saul's robe, his heart troubled him immediately; and despite the triviality of the act in comparison to all what Saul had done to him, David felt the gross of his mistake towards the anointed one of the Lord and he said: *'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord'* (1Samuel 24: 5, 6). David responded as such because his heart had acquired sensitivity, tenderness, humility and contrition.

If repentance is not completed in a correct way, there will be serious and destructive consequences.

This is apparent in the life of David and Solomon.

When David sinned by committing adultery and planning the killing of Uriah, the prophet Nathan went to him and confronted him saying: *'You are the man!'* David quickly responded: *'I have sinned against the Lord.'* Then Nathan replied: *'The Lord also has put away your sin'* (2Samuel 12: 13). As soon as David repented of his sin, he heard the words of forgiveness: *'has put away your sin'*. Yet, following these words of forgiveness, he was also told: *'However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die'* (2Samuel 12: 14). Not only this, but he was also told: *'Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house... I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbour... For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun'* (2 Samuel 12: 9 – 12).

Thus, we can clearly see that there are two aspects/sides for repentance:

- a. Repentance by confessing the sin and asking for forgiveness which is granted instantaneously.

- b. Dealing with the results and consequences of sin; that is, dealing with the thorns and thistles which sin causes in the land of our responsibility like what happened with Adam in the Garden and with David and the kingdom of Israel in the above mentioned story.

In the story of David, sin resulted in:

- The death of the son of adultery

- The occurrence of this sin in David's family: the story of Amnon and Tamar
- Absalom's treason against his father: David's flee from Israel; war between David and his son, Absalom
- Division in Israel and becoming spiritually lukewarm; and finally, the census and the Lord striking Israel

It took time to deal with all this and it was not without pain and losses. However, David completed his repentance. First, he completed his spiritual responsibility by his immediate and fast repentance of his sin and he heard the Lord's forgiveness proclaimed by the prophet: *'The Lord also has put away your sin'*. After that, he had to deal with the thorns and thistles which were caused in his land, his household and his kingdom. He humbled himself before the Lord all through. Before the death of his son, he fasted and lay down on the ground all night (2Samuel 12: 16). At the time of his escape as a result of Absalom's treason and Shimei cursing him, he said: *'let him curse...it may be that the Lord will look on my affliction'* (2Samuel 16: 10, 12). Finally, he returned and reorganized the kingdom –after having humbled himself because the Lord had struck Israel at the time of the census (1Chronicles 21 - 27). He then prepared everything needed for building the temple and handed the task over to his son, Solomon, in the sight of the leaders of Israel (1Chronicles 28, 29).

The two aspects of repentance, namely the spiritual and the kingdom aspects, are clear in David's repentance. Therefore, he was forgiven and the kingdom was corrected and restored. He handed it down to his son Solomon in the best state where everything related to building the temple was prepared. As a result, his son started building the temple immediately after being crowned as a king.

Solomon also sinned. Though God had blessed him so much with wealth, honor, wisdom and subduing the nation to him, his heart went after foreign women who turned his heart after other gods away from Jehovah, His temple and commandments –though God had

commanded him twice regarding this matter (1Kings 11: 1 – 11).

What was the result?

Solomon did not complete his repentance; he did not deal with the thorns and thistles which have filled his land, his household and kingdom. This led to the destruction of the kingdom and it did not continue in the picture planned for it by God. The kingdom was divided and continued as such until the captivity. Also, corruption spread gradually in the two parts of the kingdom, the north and the south, finally leading to the complete captivity of both parts (2Kings 17).

Repentance should be through the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

This means that one should accept to put himself under the searchlight of the Spirit. Instead of self-justification, one needs to expose himself and repent. However, the searchlight of the Spirit does not usually come in the manner we prefer. Each one has a preferred method of repentance. Do we accept the exposure of our old man and humble ourselves to be purified and filled to the fullness of God? Do we listen to the voice of the Spirit and incline our ears to His voice wherever, whenever, and however it comes?

Let us be vigilant in our repentance

Let us search ourselves patiently and continually seeking the help and guidance of the Spirit who alone can reveal the inner depth and motives and purify them.

Let us offer deep daily repentance which washes us, transforms our minds and hearts, and opens our insight revealing our pride, selfishness, darkness, the hidden inner corruption, and the deviations of the heart.

The life with God is a continuous and faithful journey of repentance towards inner purity. The fruits of this are great: *'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'* (Matthew 5: 8).