

THE POWER OF REPENTANCE

Jesus once said to a crowd of people, "unless you repent, you will perish." (Luke 13:3) A person can "perish" in this world, and he can "perish" in the next world also. But a person can be "saved" in this world, and he can be "saved" for the next world also. What Jesus said about perishing is true for both places. But if you are interesting in the next world, then you must believe Jesus, "Unless you repent, you will perish."

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

Repentance is about living. Repentance is about changing your life so that you CAN live instead of perishing! Do you want to make a change in your life in this world, so that you can live better now? Do you want to live forever in the next world? Repentance is necessary in order to make a change? Repentance! That's right! It takes repentance. Repentance gives you the power to make dramatic changes in your life here and now! The most positive change that you can make in your life is the change that will keep you from perishing eternally. Are you getting ready to meet your Maker on Judgment Day? Are you seeking God? Repentance is **one** of the keys you need. Unless you repent, you will perish.

There is extraordinary power in Repentance. You see, repentance is a deep sorrow that goes to the bottom of your soul. This deep sorrow, however, looks in two directions. First, it looks backward. You are sorry about the things that have troubled you in your past. But also, deep sorrow looks forward to the way things should be. How many times have you looked back and been confused about what you need to change? How many times have you been worried about your future? Friends, it is repentance that gives you the power to change your life. You cannot change the past, but you can make changes that will make a difference in your future. It is no wonder that Jesus boldly said, "Unless you repent, you will perish."

When a person is filled with deep sorrow it gives that person the power to change the things that trouble him or her. Repentance is being fed up with the way things are! It hungers for change. Repentance is the realization of failure, and it eagerly seeks success. So you can see that this emotional power that we call repentance is both negative and positive.

What happens to a person when that person only feels sorrow for the past and never looks to a brighter future? Repentance that only sees backward can kill you! That's right! There is a negative side to this emotion, and if we dwell on the negative side of repentance it will stripe us of the power to change. We will become paralyzed with our deep sorrow and it will kill us. I am so thankful that our heavenly Father has given us a way out of the sin that so easily besets us. God honors true repentance, by giving us the positive side. Our repentance can look forward to a new future, a new reward, a new life.

Repentance makes God happy. In fact, our heavenly Father wishes that we all would repent of our sins. Jesus' apostle Peter wrote that God "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) It is our sins that cause us to perish. There is such a thing as the "pleasures of sin." But those "pleasures" last only for a short time and they **will** bring eternal trouble. Friends, at Judgment day, we will be very much aware of our sins. So, the time to wake up and become aware of our sins is now! Think about your sin and let that thinking bring you deep sorrow. But then let that repentance bring you to God. Do not wait until the Day of Judgment when the Almighty Lord will bring everything under scrutiny. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." (2 Corinthians 5:10) Now is the time to repent.

Jesus said, "... **Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance.**" (Luke 15:7) Yes, repentance makes heaven happy.

The reason God can honor our repentance is because of what Jesus did for the world. Peter once preached a sermon to the Jewish council in Jerusalem in which he said, " The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:30-31) God exalted Jesus to a position on His right hand, so that "repentance" could be given to the nation of Israel and to the world. God made a way to honor a person's repentance. God did that through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Notice that Peter said that after "repentance" comes the "forgiveness of sins." After one feels the great sorrow over the past, a person can obey the Lord and enjoy great forgiveness in

the future. And so, the repentant person, having now obtained God's forgiveness can live successfully. The power of repentance is realized in that person's life.

The apostle Paul once talked about the power of repentance even in a Christian. Paul had written a letter to the Corinthian Christians about a Christian man who was living in sin. In fact, Paul was alarmed that the Corinthians could allow that man to continue in fellowship with the church when he was living in sin. Well, that letter caused the church to have deep sorrow. Paul said that he rejoiced, not because they had grieved, but because their deep sorrow had resulted in their repentance! Then Paul explained, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Repentance is the result of godly grief. It is looking back at your misbehavior in the light of God's will for you. It is grief that is caused by what we know about God's will. When Paul told those Corinthians about the will of God in their situation, the Corinthians realized their sin. That godly grief resulted in repentance. Godly grief is the deep sorrow we can feel when we realize that we have transgressed God's commandments.

But you know, we can only experience godly grief when we love God. That's right! Loving God enables us to feel repentant! We must desire to please God, or we will not be sorry when we go against Him. If I do not love you then I can hurt you and feel no sorrow, no pain of conscience. But if I love you then if I hurt you I will feel deep regret. Why? Because I love you.

Can I hurt the people I love? Oh yes I can. But if I love you I will feel deep sorrow because of the hurt I have caused you. That feeling of deep sorrow is repentance toward the past. Now I must treat you better. I **must** change. I **want** to change because I love you and never want to hurt you. Do you see how that **change** in me is powered by my sorrow? And do you see that my deep sorrow is born out of my love! So, a good question is "Do I love you?"

You can ask the same question about you and God. Do you love God? This I know, God loves you. The Bible says that, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." (John 3:16) The apostle John also wrote, "By this we know [God's] love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our

lives for the brothers." (1 John 3:16) John continued, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." (1Jn 4:9-10)

Friends, if you do not love God, I could never persuade you to repent. That's right! That deep sorrow that is godly repentance is fueled by love. And that principle is true in all the relationships of your life. It is only because you love that you can repent. But Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will perish." That is like saying, "Unless you love you will perish." True repentance can only come from true love. So what is the condition of your love toward God? Great repentance can only come from great love.

Saul of Tarsus must have truly loved God. He was persecuting Christ, but he thought he was serving God. Saul of Tarsus was on the road to Damascus with a commission to persecute Christians. What would he do with them after he rounded up those Christians? He would bind them and lead them on the long journey down the road to Jerusalem. What would happen to the Christians? Well, the same things would happen to them as had already happened in Jerusalem. They would be put on trial for their faith in Christ and would be imprisoned or killed like Stephen, the first man to die for believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

But Jesus Christ met Saul of Tarsus before Saul arrived in Damascus. Jesus asked him "Why are you persecuting me?" Saul asked, "Who are you Lord?" Jesus said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Saul loved God...and now He was talking with the Son of God. Great regret came over Saul of Tarsus. But repentance must look forward. "What will you have me to do Lord?" Saul asked. "Go into the city," Jesus said, "there it will be told you what you must do." For three days Saul of Tarsus prayed. He neither ate nor slept, he prayed. A Christian by the name of Ananias finally came to Saul and spoke to him, "And now why do you tarry, arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16) Saul's great repentance caused him to get up and obey the command.

Saul of Tarsus later wrote, "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received

mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." (1Timothy 1:12-15)

Will great repentance empower **you** to serve Jesus Christ?