

# THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (11).

October 14, 2007.

## Review.

The Lord Jesus said in *Lk.15:7*, “there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” Repentance is for sinners. Repentance saves the sinner from perishing. (*Lk.13:3, 5*). Repentance brings the sinner the forgiveness of all his sins and eternal life in Christ. The basic idea in repentance is “**change**”. The verb calls for a radical moral change or turning of the whole person from sin and false religion to God and God’s redemptive actions in Jesus Christ on our behalf.

The command for you to repent assumes that you need to change. It assumes that your life is not aligned with God and His revealed word to us. The Bible shows us very clearly that these assumptions are correct. Repentance calls upon you to realign your life with God and His revealed word to us. The repentant person acknowledges that he / she is a sinner. The repentant person acknowledges that he / she needs the forgiveness of his / her sins from God. The repentant person acknowledges that his / her religion is false; that his / her god is false; and that his / her worship is false. False religion, false god and false worship equal idolatry. In turning to the true and living God, the repentant person is acknowledging that he / she was an idolater. Biblical reality says that we all, regardless of our religious background, fit into *1Thess.1:9*, “you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

We have been looking at why the judicial forgiveness of all our sins does not open the door to licentious living. Last Lord’s Day we saw that the repentance that opens the door to forgiveness is the same repentance that closes the door to licentious living. We noted in our study that the repentance that leads to salvation in Christ is not a once for all act.

This repentance must also become an ongoing part of your life. This repentance must characterize your Christian life.

We noted also that saving repentance is both general and specific. Repentance produces in us sorrow over sin in general. The psalmist said, “My eyes shed streams of water, because they do not keep Your law.” (*Psa.119:136*). Repentance produces in us sorrow over our own sins generally. An example of this is seen in Daniel’s prayer in *Dan.9*. In *vs.5* Daniel confessed, “we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances.” In *vs.8* Daniel added, “Open shame belongs to us, O Lord ..., because we have sinned against You.”

But repentance also produces in us sorrow over the specific sins that mark us at any given point. We saw various examples of this in our study. A further example is David. Turn to *Psa.51:1-3*. (**read**). David does not name his sins of adultery and murder. But we sense in his prayer that he is being very specific. Peter sinned terribly by his three-fold denial of the Lord. But we are told that when the rooster crowed the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter “went out and wept bitterly” over what he did. (*Matt.26:75; Lk.22:61*). Repentance over sins in general means that we would be seeking to turn away from sin in general. Repentance over specific sins means that we would seek to turn away from these specific sins. Turning away is not the same as walking in the direction of licentiousness. Jude made it clear that it is the ungodly who turn the grace of God into licentious. The ungodly has not turned from his sins and his life is not characterized by turning from sin.

What could happen when you profess to repent but do not turn away from the specific sins that mark you? What could happen is what happened to Demas. Paul wrote, “Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me.” (*2Tim.4:10*). When did this sin of love for the world surface in Demas? We are not told. Demas knew when it surfaced and he did an excellent job in covering up this sin. Not even the apostle Paul

suspected what was happening to Demas. Demas did not repent of this sin. Demas did not turn away from this sin.

The seriousness of this sin is seen in the fact that it is set in contrast to those “who have loved [Christ] appearing.” (vs.8). The Christian is warned against being conformed to this world. (*Rom.12:2*). John warned, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (*1Jn.2:15*). Having an idolatrous attachment to this world is very dangerous. The Puritans used to say, “*Be killing sin or sin will kill you.*” Demas failed to kill the sin of loving the world. And in the end it killed him spiritually. He deserted. He apostatized.

We see the same warning in Ananias and Sapphira. (*Acts 5:1-11*). When did the sin of covetousness surface in them? We are not told. But they knew. And instead of repenting of and killing this sin, they allowed this sin to kill them. In the O.T. a classic example is King Saul. Saul never manifested any true repentance whenever he disobeyed God. He always had excuses ready to justify his disobedience. He was also very adept at blame-shifting. In *1Sam.13* Saul blamed Samuel for his disobedience to God.. In *1Sam15* Saul tried to excuse his disobedience with the spiritual act of worship. When that didn’t work he blamed the people for his disobedience to God. Saul didn’t kill the sins that were marking him. In the end God forsook him and his sins killed him.

Brethren, before I move forward with our study I want to ask you : have you repented and turned away from the sins that marked you? Are you repenting and turning away from the sins that are surfacing in you and beginning to mark you? Are you killing sin? Or will you let sin kill you? You are in a war with sin. Sin is a relentless implacable enemy. Sin’s goal is not only to defeat you but also to destroy you. You cannot fight this war with sin in a defensive mode. To win this war with sin you must constantly fight it in an offensive mode. You must not only wound sin. You must kill sin. May God give you the grace and wisdom to fight this war against sin as it ought to be fought. Let us come now to continue our study.

## Fruit In Keeping With Repentance.

There are a couple other points I want to set before you to seal this issue that Biblical forgiveness does not open the door to licentiousness. Please turn to *Matt.3:1-8*. (read). John came preaching a message of repentance. Let us note a couple points here. *Firstly*, **William Lane** wrote, *“The preaching of John and Jesus belongs to the prophetic tradition in which there is a radical demand for a once-for-all commitment to God, a “turning” of one’s whole self to the fulfillment of His will.”* **R.T. France** wrote, *“True repentance is not a matter of words and ritual, but of a real change of life.”* **Morris** noted that true repentance brings a change in the orientation of the whole life that will result in fruitful living.

*Secondly*, the statement, “For the kingdom of heaven is at hand”, made it clear that obedience to John’s command to repent was an urgent matter. For John there was no time for delay. *Thirdly*, the response to John’s preaching was overwhelming. But John did not allow himself to get carried away by the response. There were standards to be met and John was not prepared to compromise them. In the context repentance manifested itself in a confession of sins.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees came seeking baptism, John did not compromise and lower the standards. John demanded that they “bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” John’s verb, “bear”, called upon these religious leaders to produce specific evidence or fruit that they had indeed repented. The word “fruit” is singular. John was not looking for an act or acts of external good. Anyone can do an act or acts of external good. John was asking for the evidence of the change that realigns one’s life with God and which, in turn, produces a life of morally fruitful living.

Note the words “in keeping”. It is the Greek word **axios** and means “corresponding to; worthy of”. The literal idea in the Greek word is that which balances the scales. John was saying that the moral fruit of repentance must correspond to the claim of

repentance. The moral fruit of repentance must balance the scales with the claim of repentance.

Paul presented the same idea in *Acts 26:20*. Paul said he kept declaring to both Jews and Gentiles “that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.” Turning to God necessarily involves turning away from those things that would displease God. The words “appropriate to” is the Greek **axios**. Their deeds must correspond to, must be worthy of, must balance the scales with their claim of repentance. It is important to note here that Paul’s emphasis is that their deeds appropriate to repentance must begin to manifest themselves hand in hand with their repentance and turning to God. Without delay they must begin living in a manner that reflects the change of direction called for by repentance and the forgiveness of their sins in Christ. Paul’s verb, “**performing**” tells us that this worthy life must characterize those who have repented.

Paul’s and John’s message of living a life that produces fruit that corresponds to repentance effectively closed the door to any licentious living.

### **The Fear Of God.**

The final point I want to set before you is found in *Psa.130:3-4*. (**read**). The first fact we must note here is the psalmist’s heightened awareness of God and his heightened awareness of sin. He is conscious of God’s holiness and God’s stand against sin. He is conscious that God is the final Judge before whom all men must stand. He is conscious that God is just and must punish the sinner for his sins. He is conscious that God is marking iniquities, that God is keeping a strict tally of the sins of every human being. He is conscious that God will hold all human beings accountable for their sins.

The stark reality is this : if the only thing that the Lord God did was keep a strict tallying of human sin and acted upon it with speedy punishment, every human being

would be condemned and punished. No one will survive. **VanGemeeren** noted that if God “were to keep a tally of all sins and continue to hold people accountable for all past sins, even the most godly could not stand in the presence of the Lord!”

How thankful we must be that *Psa.130* did not end with *vs.3*. *Vs.4* begins with the word “**but**”, the conjunction of hope. Consider with me some examples of this conjunction of hope :

**Rom.5:8**, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

**Rom.6:23**, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**Eph.2:4-5**, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.”

**Eph.2:12-13**, “remember that you were at that time separate from Christ ... having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

**Col.1:21-22**, (literal) “And you were once alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, but now He has reconciled you in His fleshly body through death.”

The psalmist wrote, “If You, Lord should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” O Lord, we would be utterly hopeless! But then he added, “But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” The word “**forgiveness**” used here appears only three times in the O.T. The second appearance is in *Neh.9:17* which says, “You are a God of forgiveness.” The third appearance is in Daniel’s great prayer of confession. In the midst of confessing, Daniel declared, “To the Lord belong compassion and forgiveness.” (*Dan.9:9*).

**James Boice** wrote, “What a wonderful word it is, this “but”! You may not find forgiveness with other people. Your husband or your wife may not forgive you, if you have wronged him or her. Your children may not forgive you. Your co-workers may not forgive you. You may not even be able to forgive yourself. [But] there is One who will, and that One is God. Write down where you can see and reflect on it often : Our God is a forgiving God.” This is how the Lord revealed Himself to Moses. He is “The Lord, the Lord God ... who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin.” (*Exod.34:6-7*).

I ask you, do you know this God who is a forgiving God? Do you have this divine glorious hope of the forgiveness of your sins? Do you know the reality of the promise in *1Jn.1:9*, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”? The verb “**confess**” points to the repeated acknowledgement of our sins. Do you have that confidence and hope that regardless of how many times you repent and confess that God, who is faithful and righteous, will forgive you and cleanse you? The God who cannot lie made this promise to you. The God whose words cannot be broken made this promise to you.

The psalmist said, “But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Let us note the following. **Firstly**, God’s forgiveness is inclusive. There are no limits set in *vs.4*. No sins are left out. The apostle Paul knew the reality of this. In *1Tim.1:15* he described himself as the foremost of sinners. In *vs.13* Paul wrote, “even though I was ... a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor ... yet I was shown mercy.” Paul was shown mercy because there are no limits to the efficacy of Christ’s death. Paul wrote in *1Cor.15:3*, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” Paul didn’t say Christ died for some or most of our sins. He said, “Christ died for our sins.” There are no limiting factors here.

**Secondly**, God’s forgiveness can be received now. The verse says, “There is forgiveness with You.” The verse does not say, “There will be forgiveness with

*You.*” God’s forgiveness in Christ is always a present reality for the sinner. God’s forgiveness in Christ is available to you right now. You are pressed to repent without delay because, at the same time, death is always a present reality for you. And death effectively closes the door of repentance and the forgiveness of your sins in Christ.

*Thirdly*, there is God’s forgiveness for those who want it. But you must ask for it. You must come with repentance, humbly uncovering your sinful heart to God, the God who knows all the secrets of men. (cf. **Rom.2:16**).

*Fourthly*, and very importantly, God’s forgiveness produces in you a particular result. **Vs.4** says, “That You may be feared.” The result is the fear of God. At this point I want to set before you several quotes. **Boice** wrote, *“Some have objected to the Bible’s teaching about salvation on the grounds that free forgiveness must lead to wickedness.... It does not work that way. The forgiveness we are talking about does not lead to license, as some suppose, but to a heightened reverence for God.”*

**VanGemenen** wrote, *“He is feared, not only because of His great judgment and harshness, but also because of His great love in forgiving. The godly must respond with godly fear and love.”* **Walter Kaiser** wrote, *“He forgives not so we might think lightly of our sin, but that we might magnify His compassion and grace... forgiveness should lead to true worship and true reverence and knowledge of God. Forgiveness should not lead to licentiousness. [Forgiveness] is not a license to sin. [Forgiveness] should lead to the fear of the true worship of God. It is an obedience that is motivated by love for the Lord who has forgiven us so much.”*

Finally, **Spurgeon** wrote, *“There is a common error in the world, to think we may be the bolder to sin because God is merciful; but, O my soul, take heed of this error, for God’s mercy is to no such purpose; it is not to make us bold, but to*

*make us fear : the greater His mercy is, the greater our fear ought to be, for there is mercy with Him that He may be feared."*

Let us note a few Biblical truths concerning the fear of God.

**1).** *Rom.3:18* says concerning the wicked, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." On the other hand, *Psa.85:9* says, "Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him." The fear God wants us to have for Him is the fear He instills in us when He saves us. In *Jer.32:40* the Lord said, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me."

**2).** We learn to fear God from His word. In *Deut.4:10* the Lord said, "Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me...."

**3).** Fearing God, loving God and obeying God go hand in hand. *Deut.10:12-13* says, "what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the Lord's commandments."

**4).** *Deut.6:24* says, "the Lord commanded us ... to fear the Lord for our good always." *Jer.32:39* says, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them." Keep in mind that the context of *Jer.32:39-41* is the everlasting covenant God promised to establish. This is what the Lord Jesus did when He died on the cross. *Psa.31:19* says, "How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You." *Psa.147:11* says, "The Lord favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness."

**5).** Those who fear God serve God. *Josh.24:14* says, "fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth."

6). Those who fear the Lord praise Him. *Psa.22:23* says, “You who fear the Lord, praise Him.”

7). *Psa.115:11* says, “You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield.”

8). Those who fear God turn away from evil. *Prov.3:7* says, “Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.” *Prov.8:13* says, “The fear of the Lord is to turn away from evil.” *Prov.16:6* says, “by the fear of the Lord one keeps away from evil.”

9). Lastly, *2Cor.7:1* says we are to perfect holiness in the fear of God. The verb “**perfect**”, as used by Paul, tells us two things. *Firstly*, the verb concentrates its action on the object in view, holiness. *Secondly*, the verb calls for the continual advancing in holiness in this life. This is where the forgiven person’s focus should be : he should be concentrating his mind on perfecting holiness and continually advancing in holiness. His mind must not spend a moment on the possibility for licentious living.

The fear of God effectively closes the door to any kind of licentious living because : (1) the person who fears God is continually turning away from evil and, (2) the person who fears God is focused on pursuing and perfecting holiness.

In closing, I want to ask you : have you received God’s judicial once-for-all forgiveness in Christ for all your sins? This is no hoax. This is what the Bible teaches. This judicial forgiveness in Christ is your salvation. We have seen in our studies that the true and living God has revealed Himself as a gracious God. (*Exod.34:6*). He has revealed Himself as a compassionate God. (*Deut.4:31*). He has revealed Himself as the God who is rich in mercy. (*Eph.2:4*). He has revealed Himself as the God who is abundant in lovingkindness. (*Psa.86:15*). He has revealed Himself as a forgiving God. (*Neh.9:17*). He has revealed Himself as the God who abundantly pardons all sins. (*Isa.55:7*). His forgiveness of our sins is both comprehensive and great.

There is no God in this world like the God who has revealed Himself to us in the Bible. The Lord declared in *Isa.45:5*, "I am the Lord, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God." The gods of the various religions of this world were concocted by men. These gods, created by the finite minds of men, fall woefully short of the true and living God who has revealed Himself to us.

This true and living God has promised to forgive you all of your sins in Christ. He has promised to wipe the slate of your sins clean and to keep it clean for all eternity. He has promised to cancel the debt you owe Him for your sins. In *Isa.43:25* the Lord promised, "I, even I, am the One who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins." The Lord has promised to forgive you your sins for His own sake, that is, for His own glory. What does the promise, "I will not remember your sins", mean? It tells us that forgiveness means that God will never bring up your sins again and hold them against you.

If you say these things are too good to be true, I would agree with you. But you know what I found out. I found out many decades ago and I am continuing to find out that these things are both good and true. You can find out the same by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance. I urge you, do not delay. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ today. Come and receive from Him, freely and abundantly, the forgiveness of all your sins.

If you have received the forgiveness of your sins, you should be rejoicing. You should be praising God. You should be giving Him thanks every day. You have been freed from your burden of sin. You have been freed from sin's guilt and penalty. You have been freed from divine condemnation and wrath. You have been freed from worry and fear. I close with Paul's words in *Phil.4:4*, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice."

