

# THE GIFT OF REPENTANCE

by Bob Tucker

## TIME FOR REVIVAL — TIME FOR REPENTANCE

God's plan is for the church to be full of His power and His glory at the end of this age. The greatest revival that the earth has ever known is soon to come! God is calling the church at this time to prepare for the coming revival through repentance. For throughout the Bible, we see that when it is time for revival, it is first time for repentance.

In the New Testament, John the Baptist came to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the Lord Jesus. John's message was "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 3:2). When Jesus came on the scene, His message was the same (Matthew 4:17). On the day of Pentecost, when the church began in revival, Peter preached repentance as well (Acts 2:37-38).

The Old Testament also shows us that repentance is a major foundation stone that must be laid for revival to come. This pattern is seen in the great revivals under the kings of Judah. Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah each experienced a wonderful revival and the blessing of the Lord after a time of repentance and putting things right with God. How essential that we see this spirit of repentance prepare the world for revival today!

This message was repeated by the Prophet Joel. In the beginning of his book we see the terrible condition of God's people as God poured out His judgments. Hoards of insects ate away the increase of the land. Are there not also judgments of God in the nations today as God pleads for His people to turn back to Him? There is a famine of hearing and responding to the word of the Lord. Jesus said, "*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold*" (Matthew 24:12). This is certainly now being fulfilled in the church! The church today does not possess the power and presence of God known by the early church. Christians are experiencing problems that are a curse upon them because they have forsaken God's ways. "*Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and repenteth him of the evil.... Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?"* (Joel 2:12,13,17). But the prophet Joel gives us hope! In the midst of this blowing the trumpet and calling for repentance, God began to tell what He would do for them if they would repent.

*"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you;*

*and my people shall never be ashamed.... And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh...*" (Joel 2:23-28). This promise is for the church today if we will repent and turn to the Lord in areas of our lives in which we are contrary to Him. There must be a revival of the gift of repentance if we are to have a revival of the outpouring of His Spirit on all flesh.

## **THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL SHOW GOD'S PURPOSE**

Now is the time for the message of repentance to come to the forefront in the church. In studying the seven feasts of Israel from Leviticus 23, one can see God's order and purpose for the church. These feasts are as follows: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles.

The first four feasts are celebrated in the spring, at the beginning of the Jewish religious new year. As one studies the origin of these feasts in the book of Exodus, it becomes evident that they are types of circumstances that were to follow in the Early Church. As well, these feasts are types of experiences that God wants to lead each of us into. For example, consider the Feast of Passover. I Corinthians 5:7, "*For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*". Here Paul clearly connects the thought that Jesus' death at Calvary was the fulfillment of the Feast of Passover. In John 1:29, "*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*". Clearly John recognized Jesus as the Passover Lamb that was to be sacrificed for the nation of Israel. Christ's death at Calvary is the fulfillment of the Feast of Passover. Bringing that into our personal experience, we know that the Passover speaks of the salvation that is provided for us through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Feast of Pentecost was instituted at Mount Sinai fifty days after Israel passed through the Red Sea. There on Mount Sinai, God spoke to the nation of Israel. He gave them His laws. His intention was that they would always respond to His voice. However, we find that they refused to hear God's voice (Deuteronomy 5:22-27). God then gave Israel multitudes of laws to direct them because they refused to hear His voice. Fifty days after Jesus was resurrected from the dead, the disciples were in an upper room when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them and they were all baptized in the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking in other tongues. God's purpose was to write His laws upon the fleshly tables of their hearts and that they would respond to His voice (Ezekiel 36:27, Hebrews 3:7-10). Bringing the concept of the Feast of Pentecost into our own experience, God wants to baptize each believer into the Holy Spirit that we might learn to be sensitive to hear His voice and respond to Him, to obey His laws.

The first four feasts are a type of salvation, sanctification, baptism in water, and baptism into the Holy Spirit. These were accomplished at the beginning of the church age. The last three feasts came later for the Israelites, and have not yet been fulfilled for us in the church age. Israel had wandered in the wilderness for about thirty-eight years, until the unbelieving generation died. The Feast of Trumpets pointed to a time when God announced a new beginning and time for them to begin to go on into the land of Canaan and possess their inheritance. The Day of Atonement points to a time when Israel passed through the Jordan River and came to Gilgal where they were circumcised. The Day of Atonement was a time of repentance. It was celebrated with fasting and prayer, allowing their hearts to be searched. Things had to be put right before they could go on and possess their inheritance. The Feast of Tabernacles followed, which was the greatest feast of the whole year. It was a wonderful time of celebrating the tremendous harvest that was brought in.

There was great joy in Israel during the Feast of Tabernacles. It was notable that the days of repentance had to take place before they could come into this time of harvest and great joy.

It is now the time for the last three feasts to become an experiential reality in the church at the end of the age. It is certainly time for a moving on in new vision and purpose with God. There is much spiritual territory to be possessed. The trumpets have sounded. God waits to pour out the gift of repentance to a people that are ready to move on with Him and experience the Feast of Tabernacles, which involves the greatest revival the earth has known! But the Day of Atonement, which was a day of repentance, must come before the revival of the Feast of Tabernacles.

## **WHAT IS REPENTANCE ?**

The purpose of this series of articles is to teach us about what our response should be when the Spirit of God moves in repentance. First we must understand, that it is God who starts repentance in us. In Romans 2:4, Paul declares, "... *that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.*" Without God leading us to repentance, we would never repent on our own. The Apostle also makes reference to this in II Timothy 2:25, "...*If God perhaps will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.*" Repentance is truly a wonderful gift from God. We should never take it lightly when God comes with conviction and the spirit of repentance into our lives.

In the life of Isaiah the prophet, we see a very definite example of God's goodness bringing him to repentance. In Isaiah 6, he has a revelation of the Lord upon His throne in heaven. The seraphims are declaring the holiness of the Lord. It is then, as he sees a fresh revelation of the holiness of God, that he sees his own unholy condition. "*Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.*" A seraphim then cleansed his lips, took his iniquity away, and purged his sin. God had started the process, and then Isaiah responded. Next, God commissioned Isaiah for His purpose. May we also respond properly when God reveals that our way is contrary to Him!

What kind of a response is necessary when God comes to us in such a way? Many Christians view repentance as necessary only in the first step of receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. But as we look together at the scriptural meaning of repentance, we shall see that the gift of repentance is needed throughout our lifetime. With cycle after cycle of repentance we become conformed to the image of Christ. Let's study together Acts 3:19-20 to see what repentance really involves. "*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, and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.*" A series of events, or a cycle, is shown to us in these verses in the order they must happen.

## **GOD MANIFESTS HIS CHARACTER AND WAYS**

First we see in verses 13-18, that Jesus Christ is revealed to the people through Peter's preaching. They are brought to the realization that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. This same situation took place in Isaiah 6. Isaiah first received a fresh revelation of God's character and ways.

## **REPENT**

Then in verse 19, Peter exhorts the people to repent. The word "repent" means "to think differently" or "to change a decision". Repentance is a process whereby God changes the way we think about Him, ourselves, others, and circumstances of life. In Isaiah 55:7-9, the Lord shows us why we must have our way of thinking changed. *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*

One of the problems that occurs in marriage is the problem of differing views. A man and a woman usually see things quite differently. What a revelation to a new bride or groom who suddenly is faced with the reality that their mate does not see things as they do! Many conflicts and hurts can come from this lack of understanding. A husband may make a decision that he sees as no possible cause for conflict. However, when his wife responds, "My father never did it that way," he suddenly realizes that differences exist. Of course, as a couple lets God work in their lives, they both change and learn to appreciate the differences of the other.

In a similar way, when we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and begin our relationship with Him, many times we assume He will see matters our way. However, as He reveals Himself to us, we begin to realize there are differences. Like a wife who tries to change her husband, we often think we can change His mind and conform Him to our image. This is where we are wrong in our thinking. He declares to us, *"For I am the Lord, I change not..."* (Malachi 3:6). His thoughts and ways are already perfect. He cannot be improved upon. We are the ones who must be changed! We may think our way is right but only His way is perfect. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

Can our relationship with the Lord develop further if our way of thinking is not changed to be like His? Will we be able to continue enjoying His presence and fellowship if our ways are contrary to His? The prophet Amos asks *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"* (Amos 3:3). As the Lord reveals each of His ways to us, we must be willing to repent that our way of thinking can become one with His. In this way we can continue and grow in our fellowship with Him.

*"And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..."* (Romans 12:2). God has not called His church to be the image of worldly thinking, but to be in the image of God. This word "renewing" that Paul uses means "a complete change or renovation." God desires a gradual but complete change of the way we think and view everything in this life and eternity. We do not need a facade or mask to put over our old ways of thinking—God wants to completely change our mind. *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..."* (Philippians 2:5). Jesus' way of thinking is totally different from our way. Reading on in Philippians 2:6-11, we see that man would never embrace the way of the cross without a complete transformation of thinking. But look at the victory Jesus gained as He embraced the Father's will!

## **BE CONVERTED**

The next step we see in Acts 3:19 is to be converted. The basic concept of the word "converted" in the Greek is "to turn around." You were going one direction and now you are converted and go in the other direction. But a man's conduct can never be changed unless you first change the way he

thinks. So first we repent—our way of thinking is changed. Then we are converted—the way we act is changed. Many Christians use the word "converted" as equal to the terms "saved" or "born again," but "converted" actually means something different.

In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus spoke to Peter just a few of hours before the crucifixion. It is important to understand that before this time, Peter was already following Jesus. He had responded to Jesus' call to "follow Me." Peter was sent out in ministry with the others to preach the gospel, heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils in Jesus' name. All of us would agree that Peter was "saved." But Peter was not yet converted in an area of his life. Jesus knew what would happen to him under the wrong kind of pressure.

*"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."* Peter assured Jesus he would never forsake Him no matter what happened. But then Jesus prophesied Peter's denial! Christ did not address him as "Peter" but rather as "Simon." Jesus was referring to the unconverted nature of Peter, who was very self-confident and almost arrogant. Jesus gave Simon Peter great hope that he would be changed, that he would be converted.

After the resurrection, the disciples were still wavering and full of doubt (Matthew 28:17). They had misunderstood many of the events that had happened. Before Jesus' ascension back to the Father, He told them to go back to Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Father—the baptism into the Holy Spirit. This was ten days before the day of Pentecost. They must have had a real prayer meeting in those ten days. The scripture is silent concerning the event. Perhaps this was a time of repentance as they sought the Lord together. There were plenty of changes needed in the disciples. Perhaps it was at this time that Peter really was convicted about his denial of Jesus. Could it be that he had stood before the others in humility and confessed his failure and desire to be changed? What we do know is that there had been a major conversion in Peter's life before the day of Pentecost when he stood before the multitude and preached Jesus! Like Peter, we may be "saved" for years and yet have many unconverted areas of our lives that God wants to change and conform to His image.

## **THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT**

Peter declared that the people must repent and be converted, so that their sins may be blotted out. Now, it is true that the penalty of our past sins is blotted out when we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. However, we often find that there are still problems in our lives with the old sin nature. Just because we are saved does not mean all the sin immediately and automatically ceases in our lives. It is important to understand the scriptural meaning of sin. The New Testament word "hamartia" is a Greek word that means "to miss the mark." We tend to think that sin is to do certain acts as sin such as lying, stealing, or immorality, but the scriptural concept is much broader. Anything that causes us to miss the mark of God's purposes is called sin.

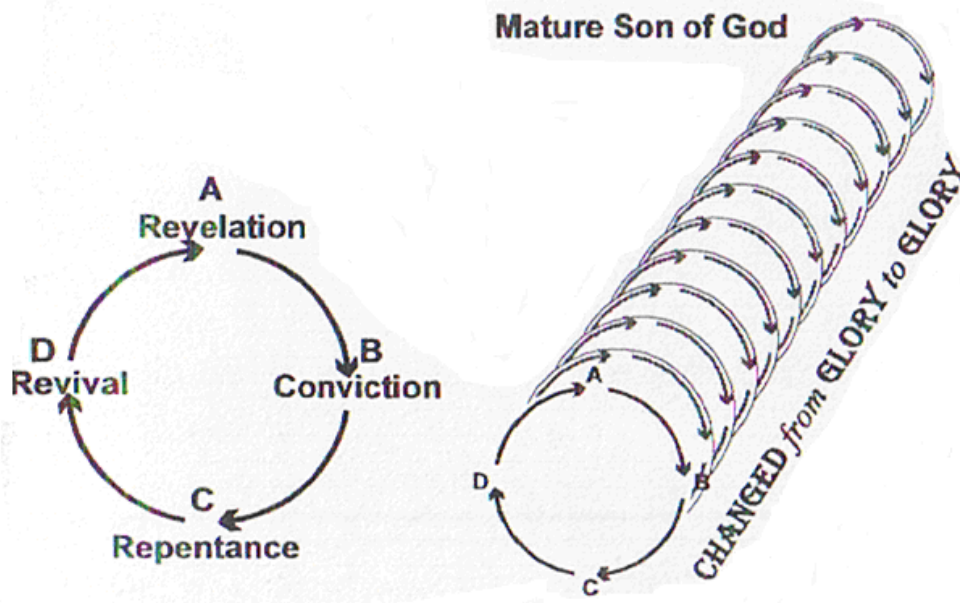
Isaiah prophesied of the Lord Jesus Christ and those who would be like Him. *"And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He hid me"* (Isaiah 49:2). This speaks of the process of making an arrow straight and polished so that when it is shot forth, it will hit the mark. God does a similar work in our lives through the process of repentance and conversion. He changes the way we think and act so that our sin (which causes us to miss the mark) may be blotted out. The work Jesus

completed for us at Calvary is not just to remove the penalty of our sin, but to blot that sin out of our lives completely so we may go on to hit the mark and be conformed to the image of Jesus!

## TIMES OF REFRESHING

"So that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you" (Acts 3:19-20). (This is how the Revised Version and New King James both translate this phrase).

When we allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in us, it will lead us to a wonderful time of refreshing. This word for "refreshing" also means "revival" in the Greek. After we receive a new revelation of Jesus, we repent, are converted, and our sins are blotted out, then we become ready for a personal revival in the presence of God. "*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up*" (James 4:10). At this step in our cycle of repentance, God is able to lift us up into a new dimension of Himself and His presence. We are refreshed and experience the Lord's joy over us as we walk in harmony with Him in this area He has worked in us. Not only do we have this refreshing in the presence of the Lord, but we come to the end of our cycle. After this we will begin a new cycle as the next revelation of the Lord Jesus will lead us into a new process of repentance in another area of our life. Consider this cycle in the following diagram:



- A. God starts the process of changing us. He reveals Himself in some new way to us.
- B. God shows us how our ways are contrary to His. The conviction of the Holy Spirit and Godly sorrow work in our heart.
- C. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. We confess and forsake our sin. Our sin is blotted out. We are converted.
- D. God is able to refresh or revive us in His presence. We are able to walk in a greater level of harmony with Him. After a time, we are ready to return to A, where the whole process is repeated in a new or deeper way in our lives. Thus, we "*are changed into the same image from glory to glory*" through each cycle of repentance.

## CONTINUING THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

This process of change is to continue to work in our life through cycle after cycle of repentance and transformation. It will continue until we are fully conformed to His image and as long as we allow Him to work in us. He wants to change our family life, our morals, many aspects of our culture, our music, our church life, how we think, our works, our attitudes... He wants to transform everything about us! The work of repentance and conversion is the process whereby God is able to bring those changes. We must allow God to let that work take place in our lives. It is an on-going work. God continues to reveal Himself; and as long as we continue to say, "Yes Lord, we will do it Your way", then we move on in God. But whenever we begin to harden our heart or turn away our ear and say, "No, I don't like that," then we begin to backslide, harden our heart, and become blinded.

Many people sit in a church year after year. They may have let God bring them to repentance in some areas of their lives, but they become weary of this precious work of God's Spirit. They cease to repent and to let God change their lives. They come to a point when they have said, "I want to live my way." It doesn't mean that they backslide into great sin. They just cease to be transformed and go on towards spiritual maturity.

We want to receive the gift of repentance whenever God comes to work in us, that we might move on with God. We must be prepared to be a part of the revival which is to come. Repentance is a gift from God, we cannot bring ourselves to repentance. It is impossible unless God intervenes in our lives! We would never turn our own thinking. But, it is God's gracious gift. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance.

## CONTINUING LIFE IN THE CHURCH

Churches can become stagnant and spiritually content as well. Churches can come to a place where they lose the glory of God. They lose the fire of God in the midst. It happens because repentance ceases to be working in that church.

In Revelation chapter 2, God is speaking to the seven churches of Asia. The first church He speaks to is the church of Ephesus. Paul spent about three years in Ephesus preparing a good foundation. Ephesus was a mother church used by God to reach out to other places in Asia. It is very likely that the other six churches he speaks to were born out of the church in Ephesus. The church of Ephesus was a wonderful church at one time. But notice what God speaks to them in Revelation 2:1-5, "*Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen and repent and do the first works...*"

The key to a church remaining vibrant and full of life is a continuing response to the gift of repentance. The people of that church must be willing to be changed. God says, "If you don't repent, I will remove the candlestick. I will remove the anointing. I will remove My presence. I will remove the fire of the Holy Ghost if you don't let Me change you."

## **RESISTANCE TO CHANGE**

God judged Moab and showed us the reason for it in Jeremiah 48:11. "*Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore, his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.*" Moab did not accept changes. Moab became comfortable, lazy, and settled down, contented and lukewarm.

There are patterns people tend to fall into through life. Different stages of life have different dangers. As people grow older, they often have the same tendencies as Moab. Going through the cycles of repentance year after year can become wearisome to those who take their eyes off the goal of the high call of God. People tire of the trouble God leads us through to provoke the changes that come through repentance. Does the process of repentance cause trouble? Yes, it causes trouble! A Christian will have troubles that other people never realize. But may we not settle down and go the way of all flesh, to become hard-hearted, cold, and indifferent toward God. We want to move on in the purposes of God! We must be willing to accept change. That is what repentance is all about. Moab did not want change, he liked to settle down in comfort and stay there year after year. God brought judgment upon him because of it.

In Psalm 55:19, the scripture says, "*Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.*" If we cease to respond to the gift of repentance, we lose the fear of the Lord. Then it is easy to go far away from God, and when destruction comes, we wonder what happened!

## **RENEWED FOR REVIVAL**

In Luke 5, Jesus spoke about something that has to do with repentance. "*And no one puts new wine into old bottles; or else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, The old is better*" (Luke 5:37-39). This is not a glass bottle as we would think today. This was a wine container made from an animal skin. Jesus says that no man puts new wine into old bottles. New wine must be put into new wineskins. The Greek literally says "renewed" wineskins or "refurbished" wineskins. Quite a process was involved to renew a wine bottle after it became old, hard, and cracked. A process of changes made it ready for the new wine.

In one sense, the revival that is going to come will be like new wine. Some people's response will be like verse 39, "*And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, The old is better.*" Some people do not like changes. They become content in their spiritual experience. They have received everything from God they want. They are ready to settle down where they are. They may say they want revival, but their heart is hard. They are unable to contain the new wine and the changes that must come.



If we are to be filled with new wine of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary that God renews us through repentance. He wants us to be flexible, not content at the spiritual level we have already gained. We must move on in God so that we will be able to be a part of the greatest revival the earth has ever known!

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