

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XI

Issue 18

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Hebrews 12:12-13

ESAU'S REPENTANCE

For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. Hebrews 12:17

One of the most common traits found among humans is remorse and sorrow over the outcome of their actions. There are few drunkards in the earth that have not wept bitter tears from time to time (when sober) over the things that they have done when they were under the influence of drink. Those that have beaten their wives, killed someone in a car wreck, or caused their children such pain that they have lost all respect for them, have tasted remorse just as much as they have their liquor. When a man has made a bad investment and lost his money, he will usually spend time in great regret at such an outcome. A man who has sown his wild oats and finds himself in a jail cell, generally, cannot help but regret the state he finds himself in. Even the most hard hearted of killers will often seek clemency and mercy when he is standing in front of a courtroom judge with the sword of death hanging over his head, and the list goes on and on.

So natural "repentance" is not an unusual thing. Yet this sort of "repentance" is not to be mistaken for that repentance which Paul says is, "*not to be repented of*". (II Cor. 7:10) It is much easier to find a hundred cases of counterfeit (or natural) repentance than it is to find even one which is the result of a supernatural work of the SPIRIT of GOD in a man. This is why the LORD said, "*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*" (Luke 15:7)

Self-righteous men find little reason for repentance, since they consider that their adherence to religious duties basically overrides any need for repentance. Such was the state of the Pharisees, as they considered themselves to be keepers of the law, taking great pains and manifesting great diligence in adhering to the jot and tittle of the Law of Moses. This is why the LORD plainly told them that the publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of heaven before they would.

Many religious men in our day are essentially in the same condition. While they might profess the necessity of repentance, they view it, primarily, as an act which others need to perform, since most are convinced that they have repented and believed and therefore gained a spot in heaven. They see repentance as a single work of the free will of men. They look upon "repentance" as a bargaining chip with GOD. Yet this sort of repentance is no different than that of Esau.

As we examine the "repentance" of Esau we can see a great contrast between what the scripture describes that he sought and that which the scripture illustrates as true repentance. I believe there are many examples of true repentance in the scriptures but none are clearer than that of David, when he was confronted with the fact that he had committed adultery and murder, and that of Job, when the LORD revealed HIMSELF to him.

Esau was only sorrowful because he realized that he was not going to gain the blessing of his father, Isaac. The "repentance" that he sought was that he desired his father to change his mind,

which ultimately, Isaac refused to do. This is why the scripture says that he sought a place of repentance with tears, but he received it not. He did not shed tears over despising this blessing when he had sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup. It does not seem that he was the least bit distraught over losing the birthright, (which is typical of the spiritual blessing of GOD), but rather upset that he would not gain the carnal benefits of his father's blessing. This type of "repentance" is typical of the man who hears of the horrors of hell and hopes that by being "sorrowful" before GOD that he might influence GOD not to send him there. Esau shed tears, but not of remorse, but rather disappointment that he would miss some benefit.

David, on the other hand, displays the genuine repentance which is the work of the SPIRIT of GOD, when the prophet Nathan, pointed his finger in David's face and said "*Thou, art the man*". David's very first response to this startling accusation was to confess, "*I have sinned against the LORD.*" (2Sam 12:13) He did not make any excuse nor did he have any thought towards self justification. When he wrote the fifty first Psalm as a result of this encounter, he declared that the true heinousness of his sin was that it was an affront to a HOLY GOD and that he was worthy to be destroyed according to the justice of GOD. "*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*" (Psa 51:4)

True repentance always magnifies the justice of GOD in meting out the just recompense which is due to those who are found guilty before it. It seeks no modification of that justice but rather submits itself to it. It has no assumption of clemency nor offers any reason for any mitigation. Rather, true repentance owns the guilt, exalts the JUDGE, and casts itself upon HIS mercy.

True repentance causes a man to recognize that the root of his problem is not the actions of his flesh but rather the innate wickedness of it. David declared, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" (Psa 51:5) He did not just express sorrow for his sinful actions but rather confessed his utter depravity. He did not just desire to escape the punishment of his sin, but rather longed to be rid of it, saying, "*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.*" (Psa 51:7-11)

In like fashion to David, when Job came face to face with the ONE he boasted of knowing, he was brought down below the lowest rung on the ladder, yea even to the dust when he said, "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*" (Job 42:5-6) True repentance wrought in him a self loathing which caused him to hate himself more than any particular sin. True repentance is more concerned with the condition of the heart, than it is the crimes of the flesh, though it desires to depart from them. This is exactly what caused Peter to weep bitterly, when the LORD looked upon him after the cock crowed. (see Luke 22:62)

So while there is nothing which is more ordinary among natural men than the remorse which is stirred by nature, there is nothing which is more common place among those in whom the SPIRIT of GOD has quickened from above, than the gift of true spiritual repentance. GOD gives to every one of HIS children a "*measure of faith*", but HE works in all of HIS children the same work of repentance. "*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!*" (2Cor 7:10-11) HE will indeed grant repentance unto all who have been given to CHRIST before the foundation of the world. "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any (of us) should perish, but that all (of us) should come to repentance.*" (2Pet 3:9) True repentance is a life long work of the SPIRIT of GOD, in HIS children, and not a one time occurrence prompted by natural remorse and free will. mam