

soul and responded. At first, He sent simple signs of his displeasure. He removed his providential mercies of sound judgment from me and some of my close business associates. The pride of vanity compelled me to quit my job and seek another. But a lack of sound judgment also plagued my new situation. Within three months my new employer closed down. I remember that day and night very well. As I anguished over how I would break the news to my wife I began to call preach brethren for counsel. Everyone I called was not home. That night, I lay upon the bed in my hotel room feeling alone and afraid. In the dark quiet I heard a voice as audible as I have ever heard. I do not know if I heard it through my ears or in my mind only. (Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth). It spoke with calm, deliberate power. It simply said, "Look to me. I will help you." A calmness came over me, and I immediately understood that God would help me through the crisis.

I got another job but soon lapsed into my former habits. However, one thing had changed. The enjoyment I formerly derived from professional activity was gone. It was just a job. I was unable to attach any joy to my work. I went along in this condition for about two years. When it became apparent to me that I was quite willing to continue this joyless existence rather than submit my will to God, once again He intervened more directly. He gave me a Job experience.

In a matter of months, every element of my life was adversely affected. My health failed. I was diagnosed with an untreatable eye disease which left me legally blind. I was terminated from my job. My children were scattered to the north and south. We were forced to sell our house and move in with my parents. My wife was told that her job was being moved from California to Texas. A festering discord in the church I pastored erupted, and a split occurred. Linda and I were forced to leave our loved ones in California and move to Texas.

God had removed from me almost everything I held dear. In doing so He demonstrated the utter failure of my own values and abilities. Almost everything I valued more than His fellowship He either destroyed or took away. For the first time in years I realized that I was not in charge. The calamity of my circumstance compelled me to accept the reality that I was subject to an authority which was more powerful than my own personality and physical ability.

My former world, with its priorities and values, was destroyed in a moment. Try as they did, friends, family, not even my wife could comfort me from the realization that God's hand had risen against me to expose all my failings, and that I was powerless to stop the onslaught of his furious judgement. I was alone and undone in my misery.

At the time I didn't understand that God was carefully directing my course. I saw the ravaging of my life as simple retribution rather than prudent chastisement. As time passed I came to desire a closer fellowship with my powerful God, in the hope that I could somehow influence a deliverance from my miserable state. I prayed, studied and meditated in an effort to personalize my relationship with the Father. He kept me at arms length, not accepting my gestures of devotion and affection. In the despair of my failed life and not having close fellowship with God I was allowed to understand that I was approaching Him less by the power of His sovereign grace and mercy and more by my own impotent will. I wanted personal fellowship with God, but on my own terms. I still had not learned the lesson which had brought me to this miserable condition. I didn't know about repentance and its fundamental requirement if I was to have fellowship with God. I didn't know that I was attempting a shortcut to fellowship with the Father. I began to realize that I didn't trust God's wisdom and mercy in establishing the qualities of my devotion toward Him and His fellowship with me.

I thought that my affections had turned from things carnal to things spiritual and yet I still could not attain what I most desired. My own wicked heart had deceived me once again. In this condition, fearful, miserable and undone, I came to the end of myself. I realized that of myself the only thing I was capable of doing was offending God. Only then did God, in the power of His grace and mercy, begin to remove the clouds of selfish vanity from my understanding. He allowed me to see that only penitent sinners are truly devoted to Him and to them alone does He extend the affections of His fellowship. Thus, brokenhearted, miserable and filled with sorrow for my sins against the Father, I began to seek repentance.

I suspect that my experience is not unique. In this time of spiritual coldness, of dwindling congregations and church closings, I suspect that there are others who are similarly disquieted in their souls; other ministers who believe their preaching lacks power and who consider their labors ineffective. It is to those of you who are cast down, who are cast down, who are seeking to understand our present condition, who are suspect of your motivations to serve and the nature of your devotion to God, that I address my remarks.

The subject of repentance is so contextually far-reaching in scripture that the necessary brevity of this treatise does not permit comprehensive examination. Therefore, examination of the subject is limited to a discussion of three points which are topically framed to a proposition of the necessity of penitent church leadership. I make no claims that this discussion presents a comprehensive exposition of the doctrine of repentance.

The three related topics are follows: 1. The validity of repentance as a Bible doctrine. 2. What constitutes repentance. 3. The necessity of repentance. Each topic will focus upon repentance in relation to the ministry, and where appropriate, will address the relationship of a penitent ministry to penitent church members.

Validity of Repentance as a Bible Doctrine

To some it may seem a bit peculiar that examination of the doctrine of repentance contains a discussion of whether or not it is a valid Bible doctrine. I have chosen to include the topic for three reasons.

1. The present day ethic of discouraging any vein of critical self-examination represents a cultural reluctance to admit the commission of sin. The tenets of transient moral values and situational ethics discourage us from admitting that we are sinners. Even when our sinful actions are indisputable we are allowed to sidestep responsibility, and thereby repentance, by claiming that we are victims who simply acted out the inevitable consequence of our victimization. Of

course, all of this flies in the face of an objective morality. However, when a society declines to a condition in which subjective values serve as the underpinning for determining ethical behaviors, as an ethic, repentance becomes irrelevant. Its practice is soon forgotten. The consequence of subjective moral values is that eventually virtually any behavior can be rationalized. In this circumstance it is difficult to establish logical grounds for consistently associating certain behaviors with sin. When one is unable to clearly associate his behavior with sin he is unable to understand the need for repentance. In such an atmosphere, as a social value, repentance is irrelevant because other social values, such as victimization, replace it. When actions can be explained and justified on the basis of victimization there is neither moral nor philosophical reason to repent.

2. Aside from cultural pressures, the carnal nature of man is such that he is reluctant to repent. His reluctance is an expression of the whole issue of the self-righteousness of carnality. When left to the vanity of his humanness, man will make himself the standard for righteousness in order to avoid the necessity of repentance. This reality is the central point of the Old Testament Book of Job. Job's friends *ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Job 32:1*. In his condition of self-righteousness Job was unable to deal with the issue of his own sins, because he did not associate his attitudes and actions with unrighteousness. He could not understand the necessity of repentance as long as he saw himself as a model of acceptable behavior. Certainly, he possessed spiritual comprehension of godly morality, but he was unable to apply certain principles of God's moral values to himself as long as he viewed himself as the standard for righteousness. He deceived himself by rationalizing his attitudes and behaviors to the point of convincing himself that they were ethical expressions of godly morals. Thus, Job was justified in his own eyes.

It is noteworthy that God called Job perfect and upright. The Lord was speaking subjectively. Job was not perfect and upright in comparison to God. He was relatively perfect and upright in comparison to other men. The import of this is that though Job was *comparatively* the most perfect and upright man on earth (*there is none like him in the earth; Job 1:8*) he was still a sinner. Job's case reveals that even the most charitable and noble of humanity is prone to the vanities of self-righteousness. If Job could not escape self-righteous inclinations neither can the rest of us. Furthermore, until the Lord brought him down and thereby forced him to compare himself to God rather than other men, Job did not understand that he was self-righteous. It is the same with each of us. Unless we measure ourselves to Christ we will find some way to justify ourselves in our own eyes.

3. The third reason for including a discussion of the validity of repentance as a bible doctrine is that scriptural evidence seems to indicate that our need to repent is easily forgotten. This must have been Job's case. He did not become the most perfect and upright man upon the earth by not ever repenting. If repentance is a scriptural principle of the divine decrees of the morality of God's will with regard to human behavior then Job must have repented in the past or else God would not have observed that he was perfect and upright.

David is another who had some difficulty remembering the need to repent. He did not seek repentance for his sins of fornication and murder until Nathan hypothetically presented his sins to him. In the abstract David identified his sins as sinful and condemned them. However, he didn't see himself as the sinner until Nathan plainly accused him. Until Nathan accused him, David was able to justify his actions in his own mind. The arrogance of carnal vanity clouded his thinking and he forgot that, like every child of God, he needed to continually seek repentance and gain God's forgiveness.

Also, the response which Jesus gave to the Pharisees' suspicion of the sinners and publicans which were drawn to him (Luke 15:1-10) indicates they no longer understood the importance and functionality of repentance. In fact, the whole message of the Savior, beginning with Luke 15:1 and concluding with Luke 17:10 teaches what happens to those who do not repent.

The tenets of repentance are taught in scripture from three unique perspectives. They are taught as abstract principles, by example, and as spiritual experience. However before examining doctrinal context, a brief word study is in order

Word Study of Repent and Convert

According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, there are two Hebrew words for repent, repentance, repented, etc.. They are *naucham* and *shuwb*. *Shuwb* is a primitive root which literally means: *to turn back (hence away) trans. or intrans., literally or figuratively (not necessarily with the idea of return to the starting point.)* As with many Hebrew words, *shuwb* is often translated into English based upon context. The word appears in the Old Testament 1,340 times in 951 verse passages. It is variously translated into English as return, bring back, restore, come again, convert and repent. The last two translations, convert and repent, are particularly interesting. Evidently, the Hebrews held the concepts of repentance and conversion in such close relationship that they used the same word for both. Examination of the New Testament Greek reveals why this was so.

The Greek words for repent are: *Metanoeo v., Metanoia n., and Ametameletos adj.*. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament, in verb tense it means: *literally, to perceive afterwards implying change, to perceive the mind, the seat of moral reflection.* When compared to the English translation of the Hebrew word *shuwb*, the English translation of *metanoeo* from the Greek is more concise. The Greek definition carries a singular idea of a change in one's perception or thinking.

The objective orientation of Greek language identifies the difference in definitions of repentance and conversion when compared to the Hebrew word *shuwb*. The Greek words for convert are: in verb form, *Strepho; to be converted and epistrophe; to turn about, turn towards.* In noun form, *Epistrophe; a turning about, or around, conversion.* Vine's pp. 238-239.

The contrast in the definitions of *metanoeo*, repent, and *epistrepho*, convert, is striking. The Greek distinguishes between a change in thinking, repentance, and a change in walk, conversion. Thus, repentance denotes a change in attitude while conversion denotes a change in actions. The two are closely associated as the singular Hebrew word, *shuwb*, suggests. In fact, one might reasonably argue that unless conversion, a change in actions, is present, whatever change in thinking occurring in the child of God is not true repentance. However, with the distinction drawn by Greek usage, it is clear that repentance and conversion are not the same thing.

Repentance: Foundation Principle

Repentance is a fundamental Bible doctrine. A short examination of Hebrews 6:1-2 bears this out. It reads; *"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."* The writer lists six principles of the doctrine of Christ which he metaphorically calls foundation. Note that he does not use the plural, foundations, rather the singular, foundation. The six points *together* compose the single foundation of the doctrine of Christ. They may be grouped into three categories, as follows:

1. Personal Commitment: Repentance from dead works and faith toward God denote the personal actions of a change in thinking, repentance, and a change in walk, conversion. Conversion is included because faith without works is dead. Works denotes actions. Faithful actions, a changed walk, is conversion. Repentance and faith are personal action tenets. Further, the grouping together of repentance and faith toward God indicates that a relationship exists between the two. It is impossible to repent without faith toward God. It is also impossible to exercise faith toward God and remain impenitent. In this sense, the two principles are integral. They cannot be separated. All who are faithful repent, and all who repent are faithful. It is also probable that a synergy exists between faith and repentance. Faith is strengthened through repentance and thus increased; and, it is through faithfulness that the attributes of repentance are exercised, whereby repentance is magnified in the life of the believer. Faith is more faith because of repentance, and repentance is more repentance because of faith.

2. Ecclesiastic function: Baptisms and laying on of hands are formal or structural faith principles. They address the validity of church identity and authority in relation to faith, practice and structure as ecclesiastic functions. Baptisms is not limited to water baptism. In concept it addresses a broader application of washings which is symbolic of sanctification. Embraced in baptisms is the whole scope of sanctification, including eternal and practical. The whole scope of the doctrine of sanctification addresses both faith and practice, personally, as a believer, and institutionally, as a church member. Baptisms establishes the identity of the true church from a viewpoint of the doctrines of grace as eternal sanctification and the doctrines of growing in grace as providential sanctification. This indicates that salvations of eternal and providential sanctifications are foundational tenets of the doctrine of Christ; and are necessary components of the structure and pattern of the church.

Laying on of hands is representative of the structural pattern of church government and instruction. This tenet also indicates that a formal succession from Christ of a God-called ministry is an element of church identity.

Together, the two tenets demonstrate the validity of structurally organized faith as a fundamental doctrine of Christ Jesus. They identify church identity and authority as foundation doctrines.

3. Theological insight: Every tenet of grace is embraced in the general principles of resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Total Depravity of the Adamic Race, Predestination, Election, Justification, Sanctification, Glorification of the Just and Eternal Punishment of the Wicked can all be variously identified as sub-tenets of these two general principles.

The Hebrew letter designates repentance as a component of the first element, Personal Commitment, of the foundational doctrine of Christ; *"...not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God...."* Hebrews 6:1. Not only so, by placing personal commitment tenets first in sequential order of the doctrine of Christ the writer identified repentance from dead works and faith toward God as the inaugural or beginning principles of the doctrine of Christ. A.T. Robertson, in Word Pictures of the New Testament, explains that the word foundation, as it is used in Hebrews 6:1, is a metaphor. Robertson states that the Greek word for foundation, *themelios*, is "the regular idiom for laying the foundation of a building." In his Greek/English Lexicon of the New Testament, Thayer concurs with Robertson. He defines *themelios* as "laid down as a foundation, belonging to a foundation..., metaphorically the foundations, beginnings, first principles of an institution or system of truth." Notice, Thayer states that *themelios* is used as a metaphor for *first principles*. Based upon Robertson and Thayer's word studies it may be concluded that the Hebrew writer identified the tenets of personal commitment, repentance from dead works and faith toward God as the initial first principles of the doctrine of Christ.

The use of foundation as a metaphor to identify the concept of first principles lends credence to the assertion that the writer intended to convey a concept of sequential order to the first principles; and, that the integral of repentance from dead works and faith toward God is first in an ordered sequence of the three first principle groups which, together, constitute the doctrine of Christ. When laying a foundation, the particular sequence of labor and material is both logical and important. One first trenches the foundation. Next, the trenches are formed and leveled. Then, the foundation material is poured into the form. Similarly, it may be assumed that the sequential order of the three groups, as the foundation of the doctrine of Christ is both logical and important. In sequence, repentance from dead works and faith toward God is the first work of the doctrine of Christ. It does not precede the Savior since he is the Cornerstone. The

building is aligned by the holiness and righteousness of his person. Repentance and faith do not precede regeneration. Staying with our building metaphor, Christ first purchased the building site before construction began. He clears the land of debris and prepares the site before any work on the building occurs. However, from the perspective of discipleship, no thoughts, words or actions can be acceptable to God if faithful repentance is absent. Observance of the structural pattern of faith and practice in the church and understanding of the doctrines of grace do not identify one as a true follower of Christ Jesus unless repentance from dead works and faith toward God is first present. Conforming to a scriptural model of church polity and adopting the principles of grace, absent the spiritual context of faithful repentance, do not constitute discipleship. Faithful personal commitment brings spiritual empowerment to applications of the structural pattern of church polity and the doctrines of grace. Without repentance there is no spiritual context for correctly applying any other tenets of the doctrine of Christ. When repentance is absent the remaining principles lose their spiritual significance. In this circumstance legalism and sentimentalism replace true spirituality as the basis for making applications of these doctrines. Repentance is the first evidence of discipleship.

There is scriptural sequence throughout the Bible which seems to indicate that repentance is a first work principle. Bible historians generally agree that the book of Job is the first, or earliest, compiled book of the Bible. The central theme of Job is repentance. John the Baptist is the first prophet of the New Testament. He was chosen to make the first pronouncement of the presence of the Messiah. He made the announcement in a context of calling sinners to repentance from dead works. When the Savior began his public ministry, after his baptism, his first message was a call for sinners to repent. At Pentecost, the church, as a ship with her sails filled with the breathings of the Holy Ghost, was launched out into all the world. The inaugural sermon preached by Peter on Pentecost contained but one commandment. It was, "Repent and be baptized." Finally, in the book of Revelation, the Savior's first and only recorded message to the now launched and visible church, to the seven churches in Asia, primarily was a call to repent. Christ Jesus indicates the high priority of repentance in his message to Ephesus church. *"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."* Revelation 2:5. Thus, the first message to the first church addressed was a call by the Savior for the Ephesian saints to again do the first works of repentance and faith toward God. All of these firsts suggests that the sequential order of the first principles of the doctrines of Christ Jesus, as they are recorded in Hebrews 6:1-2, is significant. It suggests that the first work of discipleship is to understand and exercise the ethics of repentance from dead works and faith toward God. With all of this evidence that repentance from dead works and faith toward God was the first and principle message in the ministries of John, Peter and the Savior, it is curious that today many of us skip down to the third element of the doctrine of Christ Jesus as described in Hebrew 6:1-2, namely the various doctrines contained in the tenets of resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment, when we think of foundational, or cardinal principles. (As previously mentioned, in context, the tenets of election, predestination, justification, regeneration, etc., are sub-topics of resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.) It seems that the focus of much of the teaching today has shifted away from calling sinners to repentance to discussions of these topics in a context of comparing what we believe versus what others believe.

Frequently, we hear messages urging believers to return to old paths; but, almost as frequently, these messages do not specifically identify the old path to which we are urged to return. The oldest path ever walked by man was the path in Eden which lead to the tree of knowledge of good and evil; which path we all walked in our federal head Adam. Our oldest path is a pathway of sin; blazed by the inclinations of human vanity. Contention, debate, strife, pride, self-righteousness and self-pity are all found on that path. Any course of thought, speech or actions which ignores or excludes the ethics of repentance from dead works and faith toward God as its first principle is not a true path of discipleship.

John came preparing the way of the Lord. He called for sinners to walk the path of repentance which leads to fellowship with God. The Savior also preached repentance. He called for sinners to meet Him in the way of repentance. Peter told sinners that they must walk the path of repentance in order to have fellowship with God. The true old path is the path of repentance from dead works and faith toward God. It is the path to fellowship with God. Only penitent sinners walk it. The path which John marked, which Jesus called sinners into, in which Peter and the other Apostles walked and commanded others to walk, is the path of repentance from dead works and faith toward God. Our forefathers walked this path. We have their example. But their example is but confirmation that the way prepared by John, which Jesus called sinners into, and which the Apostolic fathers walked is the true old path.

This is not to say that the theology of eternal salvation is unimportant. There is a vital need for doctrinal teaching of both faith and practice. The questions asked by the Apostle Paul during his Damascus road experience of grace indicate the urgency of instruction in both regards. When Paul asked, *"Who art thou Lord?"* he posed the most profound question of theological investigation: Who is God? In concert, the doctrines of grace present a cognitive response to Paul's question. Similarly, his second question, *"What wilt thou have me to do?"* is the profound question of discipleship. It is answered by scriptural instructions of practical godliness. Discernment of the spiritual import of theological pronouncements is exclusively reserved for penitent sinners. This is because only penitent sinners are true followers of Christ Jesus. Since repentance from dead works is the first principle of discipleship it is also the first requirement of discipleship. When a believer is impenitent he is disobedient in the very first work of following Jesus. This fact eliminates any possibility of obedient discipleship. If the course of the path begun is disobedience it can only lead the believer in the wrong direction. No matter how much religious scenery of faith and practice there is dotting this

pathway, it did not begin with repentance from dead works and faith toward God; therefore, it leads away from Christ Jesus, not towards him.

Truly spiritual understanding of the morality and ethics of God's sovereign grace is reserved for those who surrender themselves wholly to His will through faithful repentance. Logically this must be so. How can one understand his own depraved nature and thereby see the utter hopelessness of his condition outside the electing grace of God and atoning blood of Jesus unless he is penitent? If he is not penitent, then he is self-righteous. There is no middle ground. Only penitent sinners are converted, and only converted sinners are disciples. The self-righteous, by definition, rely to some degree on themselves, and to a lesser degree on God's grace, to receive assurances that they are justified before God.

Repent is the action word of the gospel. The child of God must first respond to the call to repentance, a change of mind, before any other movement toward discipleship through obedience can happen. Godly repentance compels him to trust God alone for forgiveness and deliverance from the conviction of sin. Trusting in God for forgiveness is faith. The strong consolation of a full assurance derived from the experience of receiving forgiveness (deliverance from the conviction of sin to affectionate fellowship with God) works conversion, which is expressed objectively as a change from a self-righteous disobedient walk to an imputed-righteousness-of-God, obedient walk. Therefore, it is by repentance from dead works and faith toward God that a sinner is able to gain spiritual comprehension of the import of the doctrinal nuances of theology, i.e. election, predestination, effectual calling, etc...

It is true, prior to repentance, one can possess some measure of intellectual appreciation of theology. He may appreciate the logical flow of doctrinal tenets and how perfectly they dovetail. It is possible that he will admire the abilities of a Being who is able to maintain his integrity of righteousness while exercising the ethics of mercy. He may pride himself that he knows all these things about God and grace.

However, the vanity of intellectual and emotional stimulation of one's appreciation of logic and ethic does not constitute spiritual experience. In fact, intellectual understanding alone will often degenerate to emotions of pride which frequently are manifested in behaviors of elitism and/or isolationism. One symptom of the sin of self-pride based intellectual appreciation of the doctrines of grace is termination of witnessing to others. The mind set is: "God gave me this special knowledge of truth. If He wants others to have it He will give it to them."

Such an attitude is not supported by scriptural example. In fact, it directly contradicts the reality of the practices of the first century church. First century disciples, including apostles, preachers and general members of the church all committed themselves to witnessing to others at every opportunity. Of all the disciples in the first century, only apostles received direct understanding from God alone. Everyone else received their knowledge about Christ Jesus and God's sovereign grace from faithful witnesses, including the Apostles, preachers and general members of the church, who spread the message everywhere they went. It is readily apparent from the example recorded in Acts 8:1-4, that every disciple, no matter what his station within the church, is responsible to faithfully witness to others at every opportunity. *".....And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the Apostles.....Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."*

Peter made a similar point in his first general epistle. He exhorted believers to be ready to witness even in the face of persecution by unbelieving critics. *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."* I Peter 3:15-16. It is reasonable to conclude that if, as believers, we are to witness a defense of the cause of Christ to those who persecute us, to the purpose of calling on them to repent (*that they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation*), we are certainly required in less threatening circumstances to also witness to others.

Only when a sinner faces the hopeless reality of his tragic situation and desperately begs for forgiveness do the doctrines of grace transform from logic and ethic to a personal reality of Christ Jesus the Savior of sinners. Repentance and faith allow him to receive a personalized view of the doctrines of grace. They are personified in Christ Jesus who personally applies to the sinner's case. Theology thus becomes intimate and personal because it is in Jesus, who ministers its spiritual import through the Holy Ghost. A sinner will then love the doctrines of grace as a deeply personal expression of his Savior's person and his own salvation. Without repentance and faith it is impossible to love the doctrines of grace because without them a sinner cannot have fellowship with Jesus. He cannot get close enough to the Savior to know to love the doctrine.

Tendencies to preach the doctrines of grace as an end unto themselves may also influence sermons dealing with issues of practical godliness, or so-called time salvation. Often these messages are presented as a sort of scriptural recipe or blueprint for correcting life's problems. Certainly, such preaching is based upon valid scriptural instruction. However, if the message is not presented in the overall context of calling sinners to fellowship with Christ Jesus through repentance from dead works and faith toward God, it is reduced to a pragmatic lesson of scriptural do's and don'ts. There is no spiritual basis for the power necessary to implement practical instruction unless the message calls the sinner to faith in God through repentance. Without a complete surrender to Jesus, which can only occur through true repentance, implementing the instruction of the message is left to the sinners own willpower.

The purpose of the gospel is to call sinners to repentance, to bring life and immortality to light through repentance and faith. This must be so or else John, Peter and even the Savior did not preach the gospel. Christ Jesus is the Embodiment of grace. Therefore, when we preach Jesus in the context of calling on sinners to repent we preach the gospel of Christ

Jesus, who is the Embodiment of the doctrines of grace. By the same logic, when we preach Jesus from any other perspective, such as comparing our beliefs to others, we change the focus of the message and lose the purpose of the gospel. Its purpose becomes less of calling sinners to repentance, and more of distinguishing our doctrine from others. When we focus more on nuances of grace and less on Christ the Embodiment of grace the message becomes an end to itself. In this context, if we successfully establish that there is a difference between what we and others believe we have accomplished the purpose of our message. Even if a call to repent is made it is based more upon focusing on doctrinal difference rather than Christ Jesus. There is very little power in a doctrinal-comparison call to repentance when measured to a Christ Jesus the Savior of sinners, call to repent.

This does not mean that we should preach less about predestination, election, etc. It does mean that the main focus of every sermon should be Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners as the basis for calling sinners to repent. Predestination, election, etc. are all components of Jesus Christ as He is the embodiment of grace. They should always be presented as such. They are not an end to themselves. Effective presentation of the doctrines of grace is always in a context of the person of Christ Jesus, the Savior of sinners, to the purpose of calling sinners to repentance. Penitent sinners are the evidence of an effective message.

What Constitutes Repentance?

Examination of this question may be divided into two areas of consideration. First, we will examine what is not repentance. This is to say we will briefly consider a few misconceptions about repentance and examine why they are misconceptions. After dealing with these misconceptions, the main body of this section will address biblical definitions and applications of repentance using scriptural revelations of abstract principles and examples.

What Repentance Isn't

It may seem a bit odd to begin a definition of something with an explanation of what it isn't. However, in this instance I believe it is a necessary preliminary to a discussion of what constitutes repentance. This is done to eliminate two common assumptions which can have the impact of influencing one's overall perspective of the topic. They address both logic and emotion. They are pragmatism and mysticism.

Pragmatic Reasoning: Repentance is not a simple decision of regret and thereby a desire to correct some action, word or thought which resulted in an unacceptable outcome. Pragmatic reasoning is not a principle of godly repentance. True repentance is not motivated by the logic of outcome-based situational thinking. Its motivation is godly sorrow. One does not simply look at some circumstance of his life, determine he wishes to make a change for the better and set about to repent as the logical course of action in initiating the desired change.

True repentance begins with spiritual stirring. Godly sorrow is the engine of true repentance. The natural inclination of human intellect is to avoid confession of wrongdoing. It is against human nature to admit to having committed sin. Since confession is integral to repentance, the human spirit has a natural, and frankly, from the attitude of pragmatic outcome-based thinking, illogical aversion to repenting. It is ironic: God's righteousness rejects pragmatic reasoning as a basis for repentance, and functionally, man's carnal nature resists the logic of repenting. Thus, from neither perspective can it be concluded that true repentance is motivated by pragmatic reasoning. Both God and man reject a pragmatic approach to repentance.

Mystical Emotion: Repentance is not mystical emotion. While it is true that God must grant a spirit of repentance, scripture indicates that he gives it to every one of his children who seeks repentance through godly sorrow. In fact, it may be that a touchstone relationship exists between seeking repentance and receiving it. God gave the nation of Israel a spirit of slumber so they would not hear the call to repent, nor see and understand their need to repent and be converted and then be healed (Romans 11:8, Matthew 13:15, Acts 28:27). A spirit of slumber was exercised by God against Israel in order to prevent the normal progression of seeking repentance through godly sorrow, repentance, forgiveness and conversion. God stopped the process from the beginning because once godly sorrow is exercised His just character requires that He grant repentance to all who seek it. He gave Israel a spirit of slumber so they would not mourn for their sins and seek repentance.

It must be noted that this is one of perhaps only two instances cited in scripture where God would not allow repentance. He did not somehow close their minds to the call to repent. It was not necessary. He remained silent for four hundred years and spiritually, Israel went to sleep. They forgot about repentance. His silence and their slumbering spirit was an element of God's judgment against Israel because of their long history of rejecting Him, which culminated with their rejection of Jesus Christ. The judgment included the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of Jewish identity.

Two Categories of Impenitent Sinners

Those who seek to justify impenitence based upon God not granting them a spirit to repent have little cause for comfort. They place themselves into one of two categories. Either they are reprobates who are incapable of seeking repentance, and will feel the wrath of God exercised against them in the fires of hell; or, perhaps they are rebellious children who have defied God for so long and so consistently that he has given them the mind of the reprobate. They have ears that are dull of hearing, eyes that cannot see, and a heart that is incapable of understanding.

Those who count themselves among the latter have little cause for comfort in the fact that hell will not be their final abode. Experimentally they lack even a grain of spiritual assurance that they are heaven bound. They may seek to assure themselves by logic and/or emotion, but lacking spiritual assurance they do not receive divinely initiated consolation. They are left to rely upon their own delusions and the praise of men to convince themselves that they are heirs of promise. God has exercised his judgment against them. The knowledge and joys of His kingdom have been wrested

from them to be given to another. God has given them a spirit of slumber. They have no hope that they will ever regain their former joys. Thus, it is from a basis of fear, motivated by the weakness and failures of their own self-righteousness, that they go about trying to assure themselves and others that they are saved.

A Third Category

There is a third category. Those in this group do not avoid repentance. They simply do not know they need to repent, nor how to seek repentance. Their new creature hearts have never been stirred by the power of the gospel to repentance from dead works and faith toward God; or else, though they were once enlightened by the message and power of the gospel and have tasted the heavenly gifts they have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins. Their condition is one of wretchedness. They know that when they would do good evil is present; for the will to do good is present with them; but how to perform that which is good they cannot find.

They go through life carrying the impossible burden of conviction for their sins. They deceive themselves with carnal distraction, thinking that if they can produce some excitement, or frivolity the oppressive affliction of their besetting sins can somehow be forgotten or ignored. Their existence is depression and despair camouflaged by carnal distraction. They distract themselves with drugs or alcohol. They seek release from their misery by playing the lottery or some other form of gambling in the belief that wealth will bring happiness. Some seek escape from the misery of lonely and unfulfilled lives through sexual promiscuity. Some have abortions. Some rob or kill. They commit suicide. They do all this in an effort to gain some relief from conviction of the bloodguiltiness of sin. In truth, the gospel is the only thing that offers hope to their sin-sick souls.

Many just quietly go about their lives in a malaise of desperate despair. They have neither expectation, nor hope that life will ever be anything more than just a few days and full of trouble. They find little real meaning for their existence. They are unfulfilled in marriage and as parents though committed to both. They view their jobs, they call them careers, as a way of gaining wealth and power, or perhaps as the one thing which enables them to prove their abilities and worthiness. But they are never satisfied with their own efforts. There is an emptiness in their lives that, try as they do, they cannot fill. Their marriages and children do not fill it, neither do careers, wealth nor power. New houses, cars, and clothes all leave them wanting more.

These are they who are trying to find some meaning to their lives either by carnal delight or else by relying upon the pragmatic reasoning of carnal judgment as the foundation for all their decisions and efforts. Most have never heard the true message of the gospel; or else, if they were once enlightened they have long ago forgotten about repentance and faith toward God. They know the Savior more by reputation than personal fellowship. They have heard of him by the hearing of their ears but not with the seeing of their eyes in comprehending his true identity. Many employ the same logic of pragmatic reason they use to plan marriages, families, careers, vacations and wardrobes to make a decision for Christ, with the same failed consequence. They offer themselves to Jesus, not with contrite hearts and broken spirits believing that without Jesus there is no basis for hope. Rather, pragmatic thinking has convinced them that a decision to allow Jesus to exercise some influence in their lives will guarantee a sure reward. However, as we have noted, a pragmatic decision for Christ does not establish affectionate fellowship with the Savior. It cannot provide the full assurance and strong consolation of the hope of eternal life; and, since blessing is related to obedience, even in discipleship they remain unfulfilled. Their lives are a continuous drudgery of seeking but never finding the fulfillment which only the true joy of salvation provides.

Capillaries, Principles and a Touchstone

There are two tenets which have capillary relationships of cause and effect to repentance. They are not actually part of the integral of repentance. Just as heat applied to the capillary glass tube of a thermometer causes the mercury within to expand in physical reaction, a disquieted or cast down soul or else withdrawal of God's providential deliverance pressures the child of God to seek repentance. They serve as capillaries which cause sinners to seek repentance.

Several principles working together actually constitute repentance. The principles of repentance include, godly sorrow, self-denial, confession, exaltation of God, supplication, forgiveness and joy of salvation.

True repentance is objectively manifested by conversion, which is a changed walk. Conversion is an effect produced when the child of God receives the spirit of repentance. In Acts 3:19 Peter identifies the touchstone relationship of repentance and conversion; "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted.....*" A touchstone relationship of cause and effect exists between repentance and conversion. The touchstone is that repentance causes conversion, and conversion is an effect of repentance. All who touch true repentance get converted. Changed thinking resulting from true repentance compels a conversion of one's walk from acts of disobedience to acts of obedience.

The Cast Down, or Disquieted Soul

The experience of a cast down or disquieted soul has its basis in the reality of sin. We will not take the time and space to provide a detailed discussion of depravity and regeneration; however, a bit of background is required. Man, in his condition of sin is completely sinful. He is sinful in body, soul and spirit. In fact, carnality is his nature. His natural spirit is an epitome of sin. Every sinful action that a man does is conceived in the dregs of a lust-filled cauldron which is his carnal spirit. Further, his sinful spirit reaches into and permeates every molecule of his being. Thus, both essence and atom of man is filled with sin. The prophet Isaiah described the permeation of sin in man in this way. "*....the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.*" Isaiah 1:5:6.

The natural spirit of man is attached to and intermingled with his soul so that soul is completely absorbed in the natural spirit. The union is so complete, so seamless, that man is unable, neither by philosopher nor surgeon, to distinguish nor separate the natural spirit of man from his soul. It pervades the soul in the same way that marrow occupies the porosity of bone. However, God, as the antithesis of sin, is able to distinguish the most minute detail of the very essence of sin; whether it is a canker in man's physical being or a vaporous stench emanating from his soul. In regeneration God removes sin from the soul of a man. In the resurrection He will also remove sin from his body.

Hebrews 4:12 provides insight into how God divides the natural spirit of man from his soul. *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit...."* The quickening Word of God in the commandment of new creature life in regeneration divides the natural spirit of man from his soul. This is done to provide a satisfactory environment in which the new creature spirit may dwell when one is born again. The new creature spirit is perfect, without sin, because it is begotten of the seed of God, and the seed remains in the spirit. Also, like its heavenly Father, it is intolerant of sin. It may not occupy the soul as long as sin is present there. Sin is expunged from the soul by cutting away the natural spirit. This is circumcision of the heart in the spirit, Romans 2:29. The soul is the heart of the spirit of man. The natural spirit continues to occupy man in all other ways. Through circumcision of the heart in the spirit and by washing in the blood of Christ, the soul is sanctified in regeneration. It is thus renewed, or renovated, as a satisfactory environment for the new creature spirit and the seed of God which remains with the new creature spirit. However, one result of new creature occupation is that the soul, having been cleansed by the blood of Christ, hates sin. Thus, when the lusts of one's natural spirit coaxes the emotion, intellect and body of a man into committing sin, the soul, as an occupant of man's mind and body, is offended and afflicted. It is cast down and disquieted. It is agitated. It is sin-sick.

Man will react to the malaise of his sin-sick soul in any of a number of ways. Not realizing that he has offended and thereby afflicted his soul, his first inclination is to ignore its groaning of sorrow. Perhaps he will convince himself that he has some physical or mental illness. Mental depression is sometimes an expression of a sin-sick soul. He may attempt to appease his sense of dissatisfaction with food, drink, sexual promiscuity etc. Perhaps he will commit all his physical and mental abilities to some enterprise such as family or job in an attempt to distract himself from the sorrowing of his soul. However, every effort to ignore the soul's condition, every attempt to fix the malaise by pursuing the lusts of the flesh only heightens the soul's discomfort. The physical, mental, and emotional discomforts of misery, anger, depression, despair, cynicism and nihilism are the sequential consequences of those who ignore the conviction of sin brought about by the soul's sorrowing.

The integral of the new creature spirit/sanctified soul loves the man. He is man. However, he has the unhappy task of witnessing the Father's displeasure to the man, as conviction of sin; and, as part of man, he also bears the chastisement of the disapproving Father. The new creature/soul hates sin both because it is sinful and also because sin causes it affliction. The new creature/soul groans within to be delivered from the corrupt influences of man's carnal nature. He is thus at the very heart of the pitched warfare raging between the new creature spirit and the flesh. The soul is wounded and afflicted. It is cast down and disquieted.

The message of the cast down soul is a constant and desperate plea for repentance. However, if the man does not know that he can repent or how to repent the pleas go unanswered. Also, if the influence of man's carnal spirit is too great man will resist the pressure to repent even if he knows he should. The only response acceptable to the Father, and therefore to the new creature/soul is godly sorrow. When the man begins to associate his unhappiness, discontentment, depression, etc., to sins he has committed against a righteous and holy God he will seek to repent through Godly sorrow.

Withdrawal of Providential Deliverance

Another capillary principle of repentance is God's withdrawal of providential deliverance. In some instances, as a method of bringing one to repentance, God will withdraw providence and allow calamity to occur in the sinner's life. This principle is plainly stated in II Chronicles 7:13-14. *"If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* Notice the relationship of withdrawal of providence and repentance. The scripture implies a relationship between the occurrence of calamity and commission of sin. It promises that calamity will end as the result of repentance from sin. It must be noted that other scripture, specifically John 9:2-3, teaches that not all calamity is the result of direct acts of sinning. The Apostles asked the question of Jesus, who had sinned, the man born blind or his parents. The Savior indicated that his blindness did not result from acts of sin by the blind man or his parents.

However, II Chronicles 7:13-14 plainly teaches that sinful actions can result in God withdrawing providential deliverance. Sometimes the withdrawal is direct and dramatic as was the case with Job. In other instances the withdrawal is subtle, taking more the form of steadily increasing pressure. In calling Israel to repentance through the prophet Haggai, the Lord described the drudgery of life void of his providential care. He demonstrated that sometimes his judgment against impenitence is manifest as the unceasing pressure of our continuous failure to accomplish or gain what we most desire. *Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes."* Haggai 1:5-6 (This sounds slightly familiar. I believe the politicians are describing it as static wages with rising costs.) The narrative provides a description of futility

and frustration. It reveals a circumstance in which no matter what is tried nor how hard one works, nothing seems to improve. As with the passage in II Chronicles, notice that the Lord associates failure with impenitence. This time, rather than failure being fashioned as a dramatic calamity, it is more mundane. Sometimes we forget that in Jonah's case God sent both the whale and the worm. Sometimes God visits us with dramatic consequence. Other times He uses the mundane. In either case He is reminding us of our need to repent.

Godly Sorrow

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." II Corinthians 7:9-10

The first principle of repentance, of actually seeking to repent, is godly sorrow. It is the engine of repentance. It actually works repentance. Without godly sorrow the sinner lacks motivation to repent. Without it there can be no confession, no supplication to the Father for forgiveness. Lacking godly sorrow the sinner is simply unable to repent. This is the reason God gave Israel a spirit of slumber, as we have noted. If they could not associate their afflictions with their sins, thus realizing they had offended God, they would not have occasion to mourn their sins.

Godly sorrow is the sorrow of the sinner who genuinely mourns over the reality that he has committed sins against God. It is a view of sin from the attitude of having offended God. Only the sinner who views Jesus as his personal Savior is able to attain this attitude. Not only is sin viewed in the context of offending a righteous God, it is also lamented with the attitude that this sin is the reason that Jesus suffered so terribly upon the cross. It causes one to feel personally responsible for all that he suffered. The effect of such an attitude is very real pain.

There is nothing abstract about sin to one who mourns with godly sorrow. When he thinks of his sin, whether it be a lie he has told, being angry without cause, stealing, doing drugs, or whatever, he sees that sin as having caused his dear brother, Jesus, to suffer terribly and die. Further, he understands that Jesus knew that this stupid and evil sin, together with a myriad of others, was the cause of his suffering and death. He knows of the love that the Savior has for him. The fact that, with dying breath, Jesus pronounced only love for him only deepens the pain of his sorrow and remorse. The penitence-seeking sinner sees himself as the vilest sinner, the very chief of sinners.

Those who sorrow with a godly sorrow view their sins as a personal attack upon God. The effect of the attack is, it breaks God's heart. This can be proven from two perspectives. It can be deduced from the Savior's testimony in Luke 15:7. *"I say unto you, there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."* This scripture teaches that God rejoices when a sinner repents. If this is so, then conversely, it is reasonable to assume that when a child of God willfully sins, God sorrows.

The Book of Hosea provides insight into the nature of God's sorrow when his children sin willfully. The Lord commands Hosea to take a wife of whoredoms. Hosea obeys God and marries Gomer. After they are married, Gomer continued to commit whoredoms. This fact is revealed in Hosea 1:8-9. *"Now, when she weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God."* Loammi means: not my people. Loammi was not Hosea's child. He was born as the result of Gomer's infidelity. In Hosea 3:1 the Lord reveals the parallel between Hosea's love for his adulterous wife and God's love for Israel. *"Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine."* In the same way that a husband is heartbroken and sorrows at the knowledge that his wife commits adulterous whoredoms, God is also heartbroken by our willful sins.

The point the Lord made to Hosea was that, in order to understand God's attitude and reaction toward Israel, as God's prophet, it was necessary that Hosea understand the nature of both the offense and resulting sorrow from God's perspective. He made the point by commanding Hosea to marry a woman who committed whoredoms. Spiritually, when a child of God willfully sins he commits whoredom with the gods of this world. The resulting effect upon God is that His heart is broken and He sorrows in the same way that a loving husband sorrows from the knowledge that his wife has committed whoredom. God's heart is broken by our infidelities of willful sinning. Godly sorrow causes our hearts to be broken because we have offended our faithful God. The brokenhearted sinner views his sins from God's perspective.

Confession

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28-13 *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9*

Godly sorrow compels the sinner to confess his sin; which God requires before He will grant repentance. It is the admission of having committed an offense against God. It removes pretence and precludes any attempt to rationalize sinning. Any grain of pretence which we may try to offer the Lord is an attempt to lessen the seriousness of the offense. It nullifies the confession because it demonstrates a lack of godly sorrow. Repentance is dead in its tracks. There are no extenuating circumstances, no rationalizations which God accepts as explanation for committing sin. With God, morality is fixed. Therefore, ethics are never situational. If we come to him with anything other than a broken spirit and an outright confession of our guilt we are saying that we do not commit sin. God has this response to all who seek to justify themselves. *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."* I John 1:10
Anything less than unqualified confession is calling God a liar. It is proof that his word has not taken hold in us.

True confession places all the blame upon self. There are no excuses. Our sin is no one else's fault. We cannot blame our parents, or the neighborhood where we were raised. We cannot blame lack of education or wealth. We cannot blame a morally bankrupt society or peer pressure. We cannot even cite ignorance as an acceptable excuse for sin. For confession to work to forgiveness the sinner must clearly admit that he alone is responsible for every sin he has committed. If a sin can be explained what need is there for it to be forgiven? However, if it does not need to be forgiven then why does it convict me as a sinner?

These are not rules which God has arbitrarily imposed upon us. Repentance works the way it does because it is the only way it can work. The same elements of God's

character of justice and mercy which allowed provision for the Savior to die for our sins to our eternal glory demands that we die daily to the conviction of our sins by confession and repentance, to our temporal bliss. *"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them."* Colossians 3:5-7. *"For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him..?"* Hebrews 2:2-3.

Supplication: Self-denial, Exaltation of God

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." II Chronicles 7:14

Supplication goes to the heart of fellowship with God. Those who earnestly seek God with an attitude of godly sorrow and confession receive divine audience. The heavenly Father hears and responds to the prayers of broken hearted sinners. David, in Psalms 51, reveals that those who come to God in such condition render an acceptable sacrifice to the Father. *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."* Psalms 51:17. A broken spirit and broken and contrite heart are the sacrifices of the peace offering. They are evidence that the reconciliation of sinners to God through Christ's sacrifice applies to the penitent sinner. The broken spirit and broken and contrite heart are indications of fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. Because He suffered and died for our sins on Calvary we now mourn, and suffer in the mortification of our lusts of the flesh for the sins we commit.

The functionality of Christ's sin offering as the basis for our own peace offering is described by Paul in II Corinthians 5:18-19. *"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."* The supplication of reconciliation through repentance from dead works requires a fellowship with the suffering of Christ in order to bring the power of his resurrection to bear upon our need to be delivered from the conviction of sin. The same elements of God's justice and mercy which allowed Christ to be raised from the dead may be applied to us to the removal of the conviction of sin. Fellowship with his suffering is the basis of the removal. We make a sacrifice of the wicked will and activities of our carnal spirit and heart. However, they are not sin offerings. Christ made the sin offering. They are offerings of reconciliation of ourselves to God by self-denial. Many times Jesus commanded that sinners deny themselves, take up the cross and follow him.

Self-denial is not simple mental gymnastics. Intellectual contortions do not convince God that we are truly seeking the blessing of his fellowship. Paul described the progression of a self-denial which brings one into fellowship with God. *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."* Philippians 3:7-11. Self-denial requires that we reset the priorities of our lives. We must count all carnal pleasures as nothing. We must recognize that peace, not distraction brought about by carnal frivolity or excitement, is the only basis for acceptable pleasure in our lives. Such peace must come from God. Only when we mortify our lusts for carnal delights is God willing to grant his peace to us. The cycle of seeking carnal pleasure through sin is broken when the carnal spirit is broken and subdued; the mental and emotional heart of man is defeated and made genuinely remorseful for offending God.

This is the beginning of the sinner reordering his life. He denies the values of carnality and accepts the values of God. For the period of time that the carnal spirit is broken one's desire to commit sin is in check. Breaking the rebellion of the deceitful heart and bringing it under subjection to the new creature spirit works the sorrow of remorse to the whole sinner. It is the breaking of the intellectual and emotional will to imagine sins to commit and the carnal spirit's lust to commit sin imagined that brings the sinner to contrition.

The Hebrew writer ties all this together by urging that we make our own sacrifice of praise, the peace offering, based upon the sacrifice of Christ, the sin offering. *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."* Hebrews 13:15.

The supplication of sincere self-denial includes abasement of the sinner. We cannot truly deny our carnal selves unless we see that there is nothing worth keeping. Paul addressed this when he said he counted all things loss and dung that he might win Christ. He indicated that the inventory of things that he counted as worthless was complete. He brought nothing of his carnal self to God as justification for fellowship. Indeed, he realized that any fellowship he might have must be based solely upon the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. He knew that he must strip himself of vain glories in order to approach God.

The abasement of self-denial and exaltation of God presents the sinner with the clearest contrast between his sinfulness and God's holiness. The chasm revealed between God's glory and our depravity is seen to be so great that the sinner can come to no other conclusion except that it is by the grace and mercy of God alone that the gulf may be breached and fellowship with the Father established. This focuses the sinner on his complete dependency upon the purity, power and mercy of God for peace and joy in his life. The abasement of self-denial forces him to realize and acknowledge to God that he is at the end of himself; that without divine intervention misery will be the sum total of his life experience. It is admission that he is a wretched, undone sinner who is without hope except by the mercies of his glorious God.

Many scriptures point to the reality and necessity of self-abasement and exaltation of God if one is to successfully approach God. A few are: Isaiah 6:5, *"Then said I, woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;"* Jeremiah 17:9, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it;"* Psalms 22:6, *"But I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people;"* Romans 7:24, *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death;"* Romans 7:18, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing;"* Nehemiah 1:5, *"I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments;"* Psalms 51:1, *"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions"*

Exaltation of God focuses penitent sinners' attention on the sufficiency of Christ Jesus to successfully deliver us from the conviction of bloodguiltiness for the sins we have committed. The purpose of exalting God is not simple compliment, though He is certainly worthy of all praise and adoration. There is a specific function in the practice of exalting God in repentance. Its purpose is to remind the penitent sinner that God is able to destroy sin.

This is particularly important due to a natural inclination in man to claim that he is a victim. Many of us tend to consider ourselves more as victims of our sins rather than as purveyors of sinning. From the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden, man has attempted to excuse himself from the guiltiness of sinning by claiming that he is a helpless victim of others. Adam attempted to shift the blame for his sinning to God and Eve. When God asked Adam if he had eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree he responded by claiming to be a victim. *"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree..."* Genesis 3:12. Man's inclination to see himself as a victim of sin is so ingrained in his nature that victimization has developed into a cultural value. Today, virtually everyone can be categorized into some category of victim.

We may, unwittingly, apply the helplessness quality of victimization to the Savior. His suffering and death may incline one to look upon Jesus as a helpless object of pity, rather than the Warrior God who destroyed the power of sin. If one accepts a role for himself as a victim of his own sins he may be inclined to also see Jesus as the consummate victim of all sins. When one limits his view of Christ to the agony of the atonement the power of his accomplishment may be overlooked and lost.

The power of Christ must be seen also. *Isaiah 63: 1-4* provides a picture of the Savior in victory. He is seen as a triumphant warrior returning from glorious victory in the power of his might. *"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that in speak righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come"*

A complete view of Jesus, as both sacrificial lamb and the conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah, is needed by those who seek repentance. A view of Jesus as the lamb of God provides sinners with context of the Savior's mercy and compassion. A view of him as the Lion of Judah provides context of his victory in destroying the power of sin on the cross and his ability to destroy sin in our lives. Exaltation acknowledges God's power to destroy sin and sinning.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the culmination of repentance. It brings the bud of penitence to full bloom. Penitence in bloom is the flower of forgiveness. Having confessed sin, abased self, and exalted God, the sinner is almost positioned to ask God for deliverance from conviction of sin, which is bloodguiltiness. He is prepared to ask God to forgive him for the sins he has committed. However, before one can successfully petition the Father for the forgiveness of his sins, he must first forgive those who have sinned against him. This is a profound principle of receiving forgiveness for sins committed.

It is interesting that social scientists tell us that in order to forgive others we must first learn to forgive ourselves. This is exactly the opposite of scripture. The Savior teaches this lesson in the model prayer and his subsequent explanation in Matthew 6:12-15. *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you trespasses."* In Mark's gospel Jesus provides similar teaching. *"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught*

against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. Mark 11:25-26.

Notice, in Matthew 6 the Lord represents the concept of trespass as debt. That is, when someone offends us he takes something away from us, and thus becomes a debtor. The offense may rob us of any number of things. If a friend offends, he robs us of our fellowship. When strangers offend, at the least, they rob us of the respect that is due to everyone as beings created in God's image. No matter what form offense takes it is always manifested as debt.

Even if we are not the offended party, but are acquainted with the offense of someone toward another, as a matter of compassion, we may be offended. It is certainly scriptural to be offended by the mistreatment of others. On numerous occasions the Savior expressed offense toward the Pharisees for their mistreatment of God's people. The Apostle Paul addressed the principle of suffering offense when others are offended in II Corinthians 11:29. *"Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"*

This fact provides penitence seeking sinners with a focal point for monitoring what offends them. The only godly perspective for becoming offended with others is offense for Christ's sake. If one has a true understanding of his depraved nature and thus, realizes that any merit he possesses is through and by the righteousness of Christ Jesus, he will receive offense only when he perceives that God is offended. He will not allow himself to be offended at the actions or words of others unless he is aware that God's moral character is offended.

This perspective removes any potential for pettiness. If God is offended the offense is not petty. However, when one's own sense of pride is violated by the actions or words of another God is not necessarily offended because pride has its basis in carnal vanity. Human pride is odious to God. The fact alone that one's ego is bruised never offends God, because self-righteous egotism is itself offensive to Him. Actually, His desire is to see the pride of egotism mortified. Thus, we must be careful in our determinations of what actually constitutes offense; and also, what is the exact source of our displeasure. We must examine whether or not we are offended for Christ's sake or simply suffering from a bruised ego. If it is simply a bruised ego, the person who has bruised it is not our debtor. In such a circumstance we have no moral basis for becoming offended at that person for whatever they said or did. If we do become offended, in reality we are the offending party, because the basis of our offense is human pride, not godly morality.

In order to have our offense-debts against God cancelled by the heavenly Father, we must first forgive those who have incurred offense-debts against us. God will not extend merciful judgement to us if we are withholding merciful judgement from others. Frankly, this one point is the most common reason why God's children do not receive a spirit of repentance more frequently. It is why we spend so much of our time void of the joy of his salvation.

God will hear and act upon the petition of the sinner who has forgiven others if he brings nothing of himself as justification when he approaches the throne of grace. He seeks forgiveness for his sins, based not upon his own good works, even the good works of forgiving others, because he considers himself totally void of good works except by the grace of God through imputed righteousness. He does not claim good intentions or sincerity of remorse as a basis for forgiveness because he knows that his wicked heart is capable of obscuring motives and feigning contrition. Those who truly seek forgiveness of their sins approach God with the same attitude as the publican who went to the temple to pray. Unlike the Pharisee, he made no effort to justify himself before God. His simple plea was, *"Lord have mercy on me a sinner."* The result: He went away justified. God forgave his sinning, removing from his conscience conviction of bloodguiltiness for sins he had committed.

The only hope for one who seeks to repent is God's mercy. His only ally in the call for mercy is Christ Jesus. The Savior sits steadfast at the right hand of God to remind the Father that the sins of this penitent sinner were covered by his blood on Calvary. He is a passionate advocate for all for whom He died. *"For we have not high priest which cannot be touched by the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* Hebrews 4:15.

The foundation of forgiveness from eternal condemnation because we are sinners, and temporal conviction of bloodguiltiness because we commit sins, is the same. It is justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ Jesus. Both rely upon the blood of Christ. Sinners are justified from the condemnation of eternal torment by the shed blood of Christ upon Calvary as a sin offering. They are justified from the conviction of bloodguiltiness in their consciences' through fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. Having mortified the lusts of the flesh in fellowship with his sufferings to the power of Christ's resurrection, they present themselves as peace-offerings to God. When the Savior presented himself to the Father his blood was a sin offering. When we present ourselves to God, with Christ as our advocate, it is a peace-offering. We are seeking to reconcile ourselves to God. In both circumstances the blood of Christ is the only basis for forgiveness of both sin and sinning; whether for deliverance from condemnation for sin or conviction for sinning. Thus, it is just as futile for a sinner to bring anything of himself to God as justification for receiving deliverance from the conviction of bloodguiltiness as it would be for him to attempt to bring anything of himself to Calvary as justification for eternal salvation.

(Use of the words condemnation and conviction bears explanation. I use condemnation as it is used and defined in scripture, Romans 5:16, 18, & 8:1, from the Greek word *Katakrima*: *to judge against, an adverse sentence (the verdict)*. Strong's Concise Greek Dictionary, pg. 40. Likewise, conviction is defined from scriptural usage, John 8:9, of the Greek word *Elencho*: *convict, refute, usually with the suggestion of putting the convicted person to shame; where more than telling the offender of sin; it is used of convicting of sin*. Vine's pg. 239.)

As previously noted, repentance is defined as a change in thinking. It begins with changed thinking about sin and the commission of sin. However, as long as the sinner is addressing the issue of his own sin-sickness, he is focusing more

upon himself than God. In this regard his thinking has not completely changed. He has not completely turned the focus of his regard from himself to God.

There is a sequence to the changed thinking of the penitent sinner. Initially his thinking is introspective. It is self-centered. He is self-consumed. He thinks only of how he might justify his sinful actions in his own mind. His introspection is based upon self-righteousness. He looks within himself for justifying motives for his thoughts, words and actions. However, with unrelenting accusations from his conscience, sorrowful groaning of his sin-sick soul, and perhaps the removal of providential deliverance his thinking begins to change. It shifts from introspective self-righteousness to critical self-examination, which produces self-doubt. He is now outside of himself looking back at himself. He begins to look at his thoughts, words and actions more objectively and discovers that they are sinful. He accepts the validity of the accusations of his co-witnessing conscience and the Holy Ghost; which testify conjointly as to the sinfulness of his sinning. He associates his sinfulness to the sorrowing of his soul. He understands that the removal of providential deliverance is the chastening of a disapproving God.

Critical self-examination forces the believer to conclude that there is nothing good in his carnal self. Self-righteousness is forcibly removed. Self-doubt compels him to look beyond self for deliverance; which, in turn causes him to place hope in God. He denies himself. Gradually, through self-denial he focuses less upon self and more upon God. Spiritual repentance focuses the sinner on God. The change in his thinking is not simply from thinking that sinning is acceptable to thinking that it is unacceptable. The focus actually changes from himself to God. Initially a believer will be concerned about how he is impacted by his sins. Repentance causes his concern to shift to how they impact God. He seeks God's will for his life rather than his own. In this he sees God as all in all and himself as nothing. He stops worshipping himself and begins to worship God.

The Apostle Paul's testimony in Philippians 3:8-14 exemplifies the progression of true, God-granted, repentance. By critical self-examination Paul counted all things as loss to himself. He considered his former rank and privilege expendable. Then, in gaining fellowship with Christ, he actually suffered the loss of all things. Certainly, he lost his perceived rank and privilege in relationship to Christ. When he measured himself to Christ they lost all meaning and value. However, he also lost them with regard to his countrymen. Paul went from being a feared and respected leader in Israel to being an object of hatred and persecution by his countrymen. He did not count the things lost of any value because in gaining Christ he came to view the things lost as being worthless. When he weighed his former rank and privilege among his countrymen to fellowship with God the former things were of no value.

The things Paul counted loss, then lost, then counted their loss as meaningless because he had gained Christ, were the ingredients of his former identity. Paul was actually lost to himself in order to gain himself in Christ. The old Paul was self-focused. The new Paul was Christ focused. Paul did not mourn the loss of old self. He counted old self, without Christ, as being worthless. Further, the worth of new self was measured by his worth to God. Thus, Paul was unable to place any confidence in his flesh.

By counting all things lost Paul expressed the moral attitude of Christ when the Savior willfully subjected himself to the tribulations of mortality and death on the cross. For believers, fellowship with the sufferings of Christ is not limited to mortifying the inclinations of self-initiated sins for Christ's sake. When we experience persecutions, afflictions and tribulations from whatever source our ethical mind-set and response must conform to the attitude and behavior of the Savior at Calvary. The morality which the Savior exemplified in his sufferings was in response to the sins of others against Him. The Savior did not initiate any sins nor did he respond to the sins of others against Him by sinning. The morality of fellowship with the sufferings of Christ conforms believers to an ethic of willfully dying for sins, whether they are sins which we initiate or sins others commit against us, which incline us to sin in response. In either case our sinful lusts of the flesh are to be brought under subjection to the will of God. Fellowship with Christ's sufferings is a moral attitude and ethical behavior of willing self-mortification of our carnal inclinations to initiate sin and also to sin in response to the trespasses of others against us. In either circumstance the ethic of fellowship with the sufferings of Christ is to adopt the Savior's thinking and actions. We are to seek deliverance from sinning by purging ourselves of sinfulness whether the source of temptation to sin is initiated within ourselves or comes from someone else. True fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, to the power of his resurrection, not only requires that we mortify initial inclinations to trespass against others, but also that we mortify respondent inclinations to sin when others trespass against us.

The joy of losing the old man and gaining fellowship with Christ in the new man is repentance in full bloom. As long as there is even a germ of longing for the old, repentance is not fully functional. If the flower of repentance is forgiveness its fruit is the joy of salvation to the glory of God. The spirit of repentance, which God gives the penitent sinner by His fellowship, is joy in the Lord. The function of repentance is not to simply wipe one's slate clean of sinning, so to speak, so the sinner can feel good about himself. It is to reset priorities and focus the sinner's life in such a way that it glorifies God. The sinner receives joy. Such joy is unspeakable and full of glory, praise, and honor to the Lord.

Repeated Repentance

Repentance is not a once in a lifetime event. One does not simply repent the first time he feels convicted of bloodguiltiness and then never repent again. Peter found it necessary to repent again for loving with dissimulation, *Galatians 2:11-14*. Paul withstood him openly, before all, because he would not eat with Gentile brethren if Jewish brethren were present. No doubt, Peter repented since Paul's account of the offense is presented in the context of his great love and dear fellowship with Peter.

(It is probable that, in addition to Antioch Church, Peter committed this sin at other racially-mixed congregation churches of Jews and Gentiles, at which disciples from Jerusalem Church were also present. However, it was not until he displayed his sinful behavior at Antioch Church that Paul brought the offense to public scrutiny and rebuked Peter. Antioch was Paul's home church. It is where he was ordained to the ministry. There is a lesson for us all in Paul's example.)

Penitence is key to joy of salvation. Whenever the joy of one's salvation is replaced by conviction of sin repentance is required. Even more so, at the moment one's conscience accuses repentance is needed. In fact, repentance must be the mind set of the follower of Christ Jesus. It must be the attitude governing one's behavior. This is because repentance is the catalyst of conversion, and conversion is necessary to maintain affectionate fellowship with God. Jesus confesses to his Father those who confess him to men. He denies those to his Father who deny him before men. Without conversion it is impossible to confess Jesus in one's life.

The cycle of godly sorrow, confession, self-denial, supplication and forgiveness must continue in the life of the sinner for as long as he is a sinner. None of us lives above sin. The only method God gives us to cope with our sin nature is repentance and forgiveness. Certainly, penitence lessens the probability of commission of sin. However, this side of the grave we are incapable of living a life void of committing sins.

We should not be discouraged. The joy of salvation is manifest in the activity of patiently running the race set before us. The experience of the race is a source of our joy. Notice Paul's attitude toward the daily walk of discipleship. *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* Philippians 3:13-14. Forgetting the conviction of sins that are past and stepping out in faith allows us to joyfully press on toward the mark for the prize.

Conversion

In Acts 3:19 the Apostle Peter exhorted the Jews, *"Repent and be converted...."* This statement identifies a touchstone relationship between repentance and conversion. The relationship is cause and effect. Repentance causes conversion. Conversion is an effect of repentance. One cannot successfully repent and not be converted. By the same logic one cannot be converted without first having repented. As previously noted, the Hebrew prophets were so aware of the synergy of repentance and conversion that they used the same word for both. New Testament writers identified the subtle difference between the two. Repentance addresses a change of mind, conversion a change of walk. However, despite their technical difference, Peter's statement indicates that, functionally, they are as inseparable as the Hebrew language suggests. Their relationship is catalytic. Repentance ignites conversion.

A need for brevity prevents discussion of all the facets of conversion. Therefore, examination will be limited to a few examples of its functional relationship to repentance. In Psalms 51 David reveals the natural flow of repentance into conversion. *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness."* Psalms 51:12-14. Notice the flow of logic David presents. First, he requests a return of joy. He seeks God's free Spirit as the supporting principle of his life. Once joy is secure he declares that he will be a witness to others, to the effect that they will also repent and be converted. He restates his case. He requests to be delivered from the conviction of bloodguiltiness, declaring that God is salvation.

Deliverance from bloodguiltiness through the assurance of eternal salvation so consoles the sin-sick soul that the sinner is compelled, as a matter of joy of salvation, to praise God. Joy of salvation, which is the spirit of repentance, evokes testimony from the child of God. It stirs his soul; which so arouses his emotion that he must bear joyous witness to others of the glory of God. Anything short of adoration of God and declaration of the glories of his kindness and mercy is not conversion. The converted sinner is in love with God and wants everyone to know it.

Notice the specific detail of David's conversion actions after the joy of God's salvation is restored. *"Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness."* The penitent sinner expresses his resulting conversion in two ways. They are: 1. Personal devotion and worship (*My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness*); and, 2. Public evangelism of witnessing to others as to the sovereign powers and compassionate mercies of God (*I will teach transgressors thy ways*). The Holy Ghost gives credibility to the faithful witness of converted sinners in that others are drawn to seek repentance and be converted (*sinners shall be converted unto thee*). The spiritual character of conversion is praise and testimony. It is expressed to God as devotion of personal praise and to others as devotion of public evangelism. The changed walk of conversion includes both personal praise of God and evangelical actions toward others. Furthermore, unless personal devotion to God in praise, and public devotion to Him through genuine evangelical exercise both are present the sinner lacks a scriptural perspective to spiritually comprehend that he is converted; and, therefore, lacks assurance that he has truly repented of his sins. (The impressions of one's new creature spirit never contradicts the declarations of scripture).

David's declaration also indicates that the conversions of others in concert with evangelical efforts of praise and testimony is tangible evidence of the reality of one's own repentance and resulting conversion. The principle of influencing others to repent and be converted through the testimony and walk of those who are themselves converted is developed more fully in the New Testament. The Savior instructed Peter to strengthen his brethren, *after* he was converted. *"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. Luke 22:31-32. In James 5:19 - 20 the Apostle identifies the responsibility of believers to aid brethren who have erred and thus, require repentance and conversion. *"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."*

The tangible character of conversion precludes us from thinking of both repentance and conversion in terms of either pragmatism or mysticism. They are not pragmatic because the evidence of true repentance is a joyous servitude of praise and evangelism. Paul rejoiced in the reality that he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus. They are not mystical because repentance requires that the sinner change his thinking, but of itself does not change thinking. Furthermore, conversion, a changed walk, is the tangible evidence that a fundamental change in thinking has occurred. The synergy of subjective repentance and objective conversion will not allow us to think of them in either pragmatic or mystical terms. They are both spiritual.

If, as we have suggested, repentance refocuses the sinner's thoughts from self to God, the logical outcome of the refocusing is conversion. If he is no longer thinking about himself he will no longer serve himself. If his changed thinking is now joyously focused upon God, his earnest desire is to do things in service to God. He will find ways to joyously serve God regardless of the circumstance of his life.

The Apostles found joy in serving the Lord even from beatings they received for preaching the gospel. *"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."* Acts 5:41. Conversion allows the sinner to turn every circumstance of his life to God's glory. He has the victory. In every trial, tribulation, affliction or temptation he seeks opportunities to glorify the Father in both the devotion of personal praise of worship and the devotion of evangelical praise of teaching transgressors to repent and be converted.

The Necessity of Repentance

In order to make a balanced presentation of the necessity of repentance this topic will be addressed by using scriptural accounts in which repentance actually occurred. They are the narratives of Job and David. Also, we will explore the instructions of the Savior as He dealt with this issue in Luke's gospel, chapters 15 through 17. Our intent in exploring these scriptures is to demonstrate the vital necessity of a penitent life. We will attempt to show that without repentance a culture of unforgiveness develops which makes revival impossible. Further, we will discuss the need for penitent leadership. In the case of Job we will examine repentance from the viewpoint of withdrawal of divine providence. Job's account presents the unique perspective of how God may act upon our need to repent. David presents a more immediate reaction to the call to repent. His account provides a view of repentance from the attitude of the penitent sinner. Finally, Jesus' instruction and admonition in Luke chapters 15-17 presents instruction concerning the culture of repentance. The Savior reveals how the same inclinations that an individual may have to forsake and forget repentance can plague God's people in the aggregate. His instruction provides a solemn warning to churches. It also provides an especially critical examination of impenitent leadership.

Job's Case

A study of the tribulations and afflictions of Job presents a vivid picture of how God deals with his children when they neglect repentance. Those who do not respond to the accusing of their conscience or groaning of their sin-sick soul may expect severe chastening from the Father. Job's case exemplifies just how severe it can be.

When the Lord asked Satan if he had considered his servant Job, it was for a specific reason. Job needed to repent, but because of self-righteousness, he was blind to this fact. The carnal logic of his self-righteous thinking justified Job in his own mind. In considering the abstract principles of sin, perhaps he thought of himself as a sinner. But in practice, when he compared himself to others, he could not admit that his sins were exceedingly sinful. Compared to others he was satisfied with his own behavior.

In fact it was the sin of self-righteousness from which Job needed most to repent. His self-righteous inclinations are well documented. As we have previously noted, his friends terminated their efforts to help Job because they concluded that he was righteous in his own eyes, Job 32:1. Further, his own words reveal the high opinion Job had of himself compared to other men. *"The young men saw me, and hid themselves; and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame.....unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them.....I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners."* (excerpts from Job 29). Job also revealed an attitude of self-righteousness with regard to self-control. Notice that he made a covenant with himself to insure his moral behavior. *"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"* Job 31:1.

Job displayed the arrogant attitude of self-righteousness in his self-assurance by challenging God to find fault with him. *"Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit; Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands; Then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted*

out. If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbor's door, Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by judges..... Job 31:3-11 Job's self-venerating challenge to God continues for several more verses.

Finally, God answered Job. *"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.....Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?.....Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?....."* Job 38: 1 - Job 41:34.

God's response goes to the very heart of Job's problem. Job was using the wrong standard to measure righteousness. As he looked at other men and compared himself to them he found himself more righteous by comparison. This was not without cause. According to God, Job was the most upright man on earth. Therefore, from the standpoint of human behavior Job exercised more wisdom, courage, compassion, mercy and moral restraint than anyone he knew. Compared to other men Job was the most righteous. However, man is not the standard for righteousness. Job was not supposed to compare himself to other men; he was supposed to measure himself to God. That is what God reminded Job.

When he realized that measured against God he was void of righteousness Job repented. His confession reveals that, at some point, Job had lost fellowship with God. He was worshipping God's reputation, his renown, rather than God. *"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee."* When Job finally saw the power and glory of God's righteousness in the scope of his creative abilities he had nothing to answer to God. He had no basis in himself to question why God had withdrawn providence. He understood that God was justified in all that he chose to do. *"Wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."* Job 42:5-6.

Job's case is not unique, though it is extreme. All who have experienced fellowship with God, then use his merciful blessings to compare themselves to others in measuring their worthiness and righteousness are in peril of providential destruction. This is heinous self-righteousness because it perverts the function of God's blessings away from glorifying God to be used to glorify a self-righteous sinner. The perverted thinking of this brand of self-righteousness goes something like this. "Look at all that God has given me compared to that person. We are both his children. It must be that I am more deserving. I must be a very worthy disciple. I must not be as great a sinner as that person because God has given me more blessings." Those of us that engage in such thought processes are guilty of the same sin as those whom Paul described in II Corinthians 10:12. *"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."*

This course of self-righteous sinning is particularly distasteful to the Father because it is engaged in by those to whom He has shown a greater measure of mercy. It is a sin of arrogant ingratitude. Its supposition is that God will not withhold his mercies regardless of how one acts toward him or his children. The mind set of this form of delusional gratification is self-promotion.

One who measures his worthiness compared to others sees himself in competition with others. Therefore, he is suspicious of any indication that God is blessing someone else. He will immediately question the validity of the blessing or the sincerity and motives of its recipient. Those who agree with his pronouncements he accepts. He interprets criticism as personal attacks and all critics as his and God's enemies. He does not claim infallibility, but by the same token will not admit specific error. He claims to have suffered more afflictions, made greater sacrifices, served more willingly, and received less credit than anyone else.

Disciples of comparative religion need to have impenitent sinners around. They need someone they can criticize. Their own righteousness is based upon the sinner's lack of righteousness. They believe that the more evident it is to others that a sinner is a sinner, the more evident it will be that they are righteous.

Both scripture and personal experience indicate to this writer that those who ignore the accusing conscience and sorrowing soul to pursue the course of self-righteous arrogance will eventually have a Job experience. God will terminate his fellowship. Misery will replace joy. Life will become nothing more than a struggle of unending contentions. God will remove his providence. Wisdom and judgment will suffer. Poor judgment and bad decisions will lead to strained personal, professional, and spiritual relationships. Everything once held dear will be in some way removed or destroyed. Unless the destructive spiral of self-righteousness is broken by repentance only bitterness, anger and fear will remain. A reprobate, or worthless mind is the sure outcome for the rebellious child of God. It is impossible to escape God's judgment. Using the benefits of the blood of Christ for self-promotion brings sure vengeance from God. *"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?"* Hebrews 10:26-28. The same judgment of fiery indignation, which in full measure will destroy God's adversaries in the final judgment, in limited measure is exercised against rebellious children of God when they use the precious blood of Christ as a device of self-promotion. The judgment does not condemn us to hell for eternity. However, it does convict us to a sentence of life without

fellowship with God, which is a type of personal hell on earth. His anger is kindled against us and remains so until we repent, if He allows us to repent.

David's Case

The account of David, after the murder of Uriah, provides additional insight into spiritual aspects of repentance. Also, the events leading up to David ordering Uriah's death demonstrates how a course of sinning that starts with small things can very quickly escalate to major sinning. Notice, the whole episode began because David chose to send his army into battle while he remained in Jerusalem. The army was sent into battle without their leader. This abuse of power was the beginning of a sin spree by David which included voyeurism, fornication, drunkenness, theft and murder.

As with Job, David required a little coaxing to repent. Like all of us his natural inclination was to justify his own actions while condemning the same actions when done by another. It wasn't until Nathan presented David's sins to him as if someone else had committed them, and David had condemned the one who had sinned, that Nathan identified David as the culprit. However, once Nathan identified David as the man, David sought repentance.

Before addressing David's repentance it is important to notice one element of the cycle of sinning and repentance that is sometimes overlooked. It is the consequence of sin. Repentance does not eliminate the tangible consequences of sins we have committed. Job lost his wealth and family because of his sins. Later he acquired more wealth and was blessed with more children. However, the wealth and family he lost because of his sinfulness were not restored to him. The same was David's case. His sin caused God to exercise judgment against David. The child, born as the result of his fornication with Bathsheba, died. Furthermore, the sword never departed from his house. For the rest of his life his children were a source of not only heartache, but outright threat against his life. Repentance does not remove the tangible consequences of our sins. It allows us to find a place for joy in our lives despite the consequences of the sins we have committed.

Psalms 51 presents a case study of repentance from the attitude of the penitence seeking sinner. All the elements of repentance, godly sorrow, confession, self-denial, exaltation of God, supplication and forgiveness are present.

Godly sorrow and self-denial: *Have mercy upon me, O God..... Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me..... make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.... Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.... For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

Exaltation of God: *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies..... that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.... Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.....*

Confession: *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight...*

Supplication: *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.....Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.....Hide thy face from my sins.....Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.....Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.....Deliver me from bloodguiltiness.*

Forgiveness: *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.....Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.*

Conversion is the reality of forgiveness. God forgives all who repent. And all whom He forgives are converted. David understood that once he was forgiven and the joy of salvation was returned to him that his immediate course was to sing praises to God, teach transgressors about God, and lead sinners to repentance and conversion. This passage again establishes that a synergy exists between repentance and conversion. True repentance results in conversion to discipleship. Repentance and conversion, and conversion and discipleship cannot be disassociated. All true disciples are converted sinners. All converted sinners are penitent. Repentance is the beginning of discipleship. Only penitent sinners are effective witnesses for Christ. This is vitally true with regard to effective church leadership.

The Necessity of Penitent Church Leadership

The history of ancient Israel is a succession of disobedience, captivity, repentance and deliverance. Throughout their history they repeated a cycle of succumbing to some form of idolatry, being taken captive by their enemies, suffering terrible persecutions, associating their captivity and persecutions with their disobedience, repentance, and deliverance from captivity. The cycle continued for centuries until, as a nation and people, Israel was finally destroyed in 70 A.D.

The difference between all of Israel's previous cycles of disobedience, captivity, repentance and deliverance and the last one, which went from captivity to total destruction, was a lack of repentance. When, through John, God sent out the call to repent, only a few responded. Unlike all previous cycles not only did the leadership of Israel not call upon the people to repent, they refused to repent themselves and persecuted those who did repent. In every other cycle, the leadership of Israel, whether prophet, king or priest, initiated repentance. The people repented because the leadership had repented and called the people to repent. The leaders led the people to repent. At the time of the Savior the leadership of Israel rejected Christ and persecuted anyone who repented and followed him. This was in total contrast to their previous history. Impenitent leadership was largely responsible for the destruction of Israel.

The prophet Nehemiah is an example of the effectiveness of penitent spiritual leaders. Israel was allowed to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, and ultimately was delivered from captivity as the result of repentance that began with Nehemiah. The prophet first repented himself before he called the people to repent. *"And it came to pass, when I heard*

these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned." Nehemiah 1:4-6.

The necessity of penitent leadership, as a principle of repentance in guiding others to repentance, is also present in the cases of Job, David, and Peter. In Job's case God directed Eliphaz, Zophar and Elihu to bring offerings to Job which he would offer to God and pray for the three. God accepted Job's offering and prayers on their behalf, and also turned Job's captivity to blessing when he prayed for his friends. Their repentance came after Job's repentance.

David understood that his ability to call others to conversion and repentance was contingent upon his own repentance. In Psalms 51 he wrote; *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."* David realized that until he was granted a spirit of repentance himself, he lacked the credibility to call others to repent.

Peter's case is a bit more complicated, but also more revealing. Peter had denied the Lord. His denial was evidence that he had built a false religion around himself. In calling for three tabernacles to be built at the mount of transfiguration, Peter indicated that he placed equal value upon the Prophets, who represented tradition (a temple to Elijah), the Law, which represented legalism (a temple to Moses), and the Messiah, who represented a form of grace (a temple to Jesus). His religion did not call for the Savior's death (Matthew 16:22). In Peter's religion Peter also chose his own form of service (Matthew 26:35). His carefully constructed doctrine was rationalized will-worship: Because my intentions are good my works are acceptable to God. (This just goes to show how subtle the deceitful heart can be.) Peter was self-righteous.

His denial of Jesus dashed the very foundation of Peter's religious house of cards. He had defined his service to God; *"...Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee..."* Matthew 26:35; and then lacked the courage to carry it out. Everything Peter had relied upon as proof of his discipleship was destroyed with his denial.

Despite all this, Peter still had enough personal charisma to draw others to him, to some degree. They saw a benefit in following Peter. After the crucifixion Peter announced that he was going fishing. He was returning to his former livelihood. The remaining disciples announced that they would go with him. This was despite the fact that some of them had never been fishermen! They had enough confidence in Peter to become his followers in the livelihood of fishing. This point should serve as a warning to impenitent leaders. The fact alone that a few of God's people may follow our lead is not an indication that we are following God. As a leader of fishermen Peter had a modicum of success. As a leader of penitent sinners to Jesus, at this point in his ministry, he was a complete failure.

Peter was an impenitent follower of the Savior. This is evident by the fact that he needed conversion. In Luke 22 it is revealed that the disciples engaged in a conversation as to which among them was the greatest. Evidently, Peter believed that he was accounted the greatest since he was singled out by Jesus for criticism. The Lord's admonition states Peter's need for conversion. *"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."* Luke 22:31-32. The fact that Peter needed to be converted is proof of his impenitence. Peter himself revealed this when he later identified the direct relationship of repentance and conversion in Acts 3:19. The Luke 22 episode is yet another piece of evidence which indicates that Peter, using Jesus, had devised his own religion.

Proof that Peter finally repented is demonstrated in his conversation with the Savior when Jesus asked him *"Lovest thou me?"* The Savior asked; do you, *agape*, love me? Peter responded that he, *phileo*, loved him. Agape is unqualified love. It is sacrificial love. It is also, and ultimately, moral love. Previously, Peter had claimed to have agape love for Christ and then denied him rather than face potential harm. Peter's heart had deceived him. He no longer trusted it. When he responded the third time to the Savior's question his response indicates that he no longer trusted his own heart. Peter depended upon God for a truthful answer to the question. *"... Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee..."* John 21:17. Peter had repented and was converted. Before, he had defined his discipleship to Jesus. Now, Jesus was defining Peter's labors. Before, Peter brashly declared his love for Jesus. Now, he meekly asked Jesus to tell him if what he felt for the Savior was moral love. Before, when the test of Peter's love and conviction came, he denied the Lord. At Pentecost, when the test came again, Peter did not fail. He fed sheep.

On Pentecost, no doubt, Peter preached to some of the same Jewish leaders that had plotted and murdered Jesus. He preached to much of the same crowd who demanded that Jesus be crucified. On Pentecost he was in the same peril for his life as he was on the palace porch of the high priest when he denied the Savior. The difference was that Peter no longer depended upon himself for courage. When Peter repented of denying Jesus he received the joy of God's salvation and was converted to true discipleship. The utter joy of consolation Peter received from the full assurance that Jesus had died for his sins emboldened him to preach Christ Jesus, the Savior of sinners, to the very people who had crucified the Lord.

The result of Peter's own repentance and conversion was astounding by human terms. Many, who only a few days earlier had called for the crucifixion of Jesus, were now pricked in their hearts by Peter's preaching. They asked what they must do. Peter called for them to do the first work. *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one*

of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38. Previously, try as he did, Peter could only manage to lead a few men into the profession of fishing. Now, by his own repentance and faith toward God to conversion, Peter truly became a fisher of men. He was calling thousands to Jesus, not by the power of his own personality, but by the power of God. Thus, Peter became an effective instrument of God to call sinners to repentance and faith toward God through the gospel. In this regard, Peter is the prototype of all who are similarly called to labor in gospel fields.

A penitent ministry is vital to the spread of the gospel. Impenitent preachers are not capable of preaching the gospel. They may make valid points. Their delivery may be entertaining. But the impenitent preacher will not receive the anointing power of the Holy Ghost which makes the message the gospel. The congregation may be entertained. But they will not be pricked in their hearts. They will not mourn their sins and cry out; "what should we do? They will be distracted for a few moments by the skill of the orator or the novelty of his message. Then they will go on with their lives. Nothing will have changed in them, neither their thinking, nor their walk.

The greater peril of an impenitent ministry is destruction of the sheep. When the shepherd is self-righteous and impenitent, the sheep develop similar attitudes. If the minister is impenitent he cannot effectively call for God's people to repent. The flock becomes impenitent. Remember, there is no middle ground between repentance and self-righteousness. One is either penitent or self-righteous.

Self-righteousness breeds comparative religion. People begin to compare themselves to others as a measure of their own righteousness. It causes competition, jealousy and contention. The Apostles were practicing comparative religion when they argued about who should be counted greatest among them. They did not look to Jesus as the greatest, the standard of righteousness that they each should press toward. Instead, they compared themselves to each other to see who among them was the most righteous. Job also was a disciple of comparative religion.

The natural outcome of comparative religion is a culture of unforgiveness. Those who measure their righteousness by comparing themselves to others cannot objectively admit to having committed sin. If they do, they make themselves easy prey for others who will point to their confession of sin as evidence that they are more righteous. Instead of confession they present sin as potential sin: If I have done anything to cause offense, etc.. This is rationalization of sinning, not confession of sin. The publican did not pray to God, "If I am a sinner, Lord have mercy on me. He publicly admitted that he was a sinner and asked God to forgive him.

The disciples of comparative religion seek God with much the same attitude as the Pharisee in Luke 18. *"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."* They never really admit to sinning so they never really ask God to forgive their sins. Since they have little or no experience with receiving forgiveness for their own sins, they do not know how to forgive others. They may go through the motions of forgiveness, but suspicion remains. Further, they will keep the confessor's sin in mind as a means to prove their own righteousness.

When the tenets of comparative religion are practiced by a church, self-righteousness is the dominant spirit among the membership. It is the thing they all share in common. Unforgiveness becomes a central cultural value. In such an atmosphere penitent sinners are not called to Christ. In fact, the doctrine of repentance is pretty much ignored, and soon forgotten. There is no conversion. Evangelical spirit is dead. The church may continue for a time; but eventually God will remove his candlestick to another place and people, just as He did with the Jews. When this occurs, because the ministry neither practiced nor preached repentance, they are held accountable by God. They will receive the greater measure of God's fiery indignation. *"Woe be unto pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: Behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord."* Jeremiah 23:1-2.

Unforgiveness:

The Culture of Impenitence

There is a modern application to the lesson of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is a warning to those who today possess the new covenant oracles of God, those whom God has entrusted with the truth of the gospel. When Jerusalem was destroyed, God's kingdom did not cease. It had already been transplanted elsewhere. The lesson of the destruction of Jerusalem is God's sure judgment against an impenitent people who follow impenitent leaders. Jesus identified the culture of impenitence, or unforgiveness in a dialogue with his apostles, some Pharisees and scribes, and publicans and sinners who were drawn to him. Beginning at Luke 15:1 through Luke 17:10 the Savior contrasts the joy of God's kingdom when sinners repent to the suspicious self-righteousness of an impenitent religious culture. He contrasts forgiveness in God's true kingdom to the unforgiveness of false religion.

It cannot be disputed that Israel was impenitent. As we have previously noted, scripture indicates that they suffered from a spirit of slumber which prevented them from understanding that they needed to repent, Matthew 13:15, Acts 28:27. Also, in the dialogue of Luke 15:1 - 17:10 the Savior specifically addresses the attitudes of the Pharisees in regard to repentance. Therefore, it may be concluded that this passage identifies the perils of impenitence. Further, since Jesus notes the effect it had upon their interpretation of the law, we may also conclude that the perils went beyond individuals and affected Jewish society. Because the Savior warns his followers against similar impenitence it may be assumed that the message has a classic application. It applies today. Any group which possesses a long tradition of religion, the church for instance, risks the potential of becoming impenitent and not realizing it. Further, the outgrowth

of group impenitence is a culture of unforgiveness. Finally, God's judgment against cultural impenitence is destruction of the society which produced the culture. In the first century God destroyed Israel. He also warned several churches in the Book of Revelation that if they did not repent He would remove their identity as his church; which is tantamount to destruction.

At the time of the Lord's appearing religious leaders in Israel believed that there was a basis for fellowship with God other than forgiveness of their sins. They believed that obedience to the law insured fellowship with God. Therefore, if they knew more about the law they would be less likely to break it. This is one reason that a culture of law worship was in place when Jesus appeared.

At the time of the Lord's ministry rabbinical schools were at the height of their prestige and influence. They were schools of thought in various doctrines of the law. For example, one such school of thought was the study of the doctrine of uncleanness. Certain scholars spent their entire lives interpreting the law in relation to what constituted cleanness and uncleanness. It was this brand of folly and hypocrisy of self-righteous devotion to a single principle, in search of every nuance of understanding; for the stated purpose of keeping the law, but in reality to prove one's self more righteous than others, which caused the Lord to issue this condemnation. *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men... Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."* Matthew 15:8-11. There were also conflicting rabbinical schools of thought on the subject of what constituted adultery, which Jesus later addressed. But I am ahead of myself.

The Pharisees and scribes, as devotees of the law, believed that obedience to the law was the basis for fellowship with God. In the purist sense of loving God by keeping his commandments this was true. But by the time the Savior appeared, the law was so perverted with distorted interpretations that it had become a weapon which self-righteous leaders used to maintain their control over the masses. For instance, in the case of the Ten Commandments, there were more than ninety *gaders* for each commandment. *Gader* is a Hebrew word for a fence that completely encloses some object.

The Pharisees made up rules and regulations for God's law to insure that the Jews couldn't even get close to breaking a commandment. Their rules and regulations were fences they placed around the law. When Jesus plucked the ear of corn and ate it on the Sabbath, He did not break the law. However, the Pharisees condemned him because He had trampled their fences. Plucking the ear of corn could lead to harvesting. Eating the corn could lead to grinding. Harvesting and grinding on the Sabbath was a violation of the law. Their thinking was that if Jesus hadn't already broken the law, His attitude and actions in violating fences could lead to lawlessness. The fence system was based upon a "could lead to" mentality. Breaking a *gader* could lead to breaking the law. Therefore, culturally, if not legally, breaking the Pharisees' *gader* was viewed with the same scorn as breaking God's law.

The problem with observing fences was twofold. First, their sheer volume, more than nine-hundred for the decalogue alone, made it impossible to know, much less, obey them all. Second, sometimes a fence for one commandment conflicted with a fence from another commandment. However, the Jews had a solution to the latter problem. There were rabbinical schools of thought which were dedicated to the study of fences. Whole doctrines existed which explained the circumstances by which one fence took precedence over another. Functionally, the Pharisees' doctrine of fences precluded personal faith in God. If, because it was surrounded by manmade fences, one could not get close enough to a tenet of the law to break it, what need was there for seeking understanding from God as to the keeping of the law. Thus, the personal faithfulness of keeping God's law was replaced with manmade fences designed to prevent one from breaking the law.

Keeping the law and not breaking the law are two completely different exercises. If the law commands one love his neighbor, not breaking the law meant the Pharisee could hate anyone who was not his neighbor. The Pharisees considered only other Pharisees to be their neighbors. Therefore, in not breaking the law they allowed themselves to hate anyone they chose, who wasn't a Pharisee. Thus, the focus of loving one's neighbor was diverted from, how do I go about loving my neighbor to, who is my neighbor. Instead of focusing on how to keep the law the Pharisees focused on how to not break it.

This is how the logic of legalism works. It gravitates to self-serving interpretations of scripture. By placing narrow interpretations on the letter of the word while ignoring its broader context legalism eliminates the spiritual purpose of obedience, which is to glorify God.

Of course, all this made it impossible for the average Israelite to understand if he was breaking down fences, which could lead to breaking the law. Furthermore, the selective reasoning of the religious leadership of the day ignored their own failed efforts to keep the law of God, while condemning the people for failing to keep the Pharisees' fences. Is it any wonder that Jesus was so angry with the scribes and Pharisees?

Lost Sheep, Lost Silver

In Luke 15, the Savior's dialogue begins as the result of criticism aimed at him by the Pharisees and scribes. They charged that He received and even ate with sinners. The criticism is utterly amazing because He was calling them to repent. If Jesus had been participating with the sinners or even winking at their sins there might have been some basis for the criticism. But Jesus was condemning the commission of sins and calling for sinners to repent from sinning. He was instructing them to stop sinning and providing hope and instruction as to how to stop! The only rationale for the

Pharisees' and scribes' disapproval is that they did not believe in repentance. This was surely the case since they suffered from a spirit of slumber.

Jesus began his response to the Pharisees and scribes by relating two parables. Quite a fountain of study is contained in these parables. However, we will limit the discussion to two points.

The Savior used the parables to quickly identify the issue of contention between himself and his critics. Both parables end with statements which contrast the Pharisees' and scribes' attitudes about repentance to God's attitude. The Pharisees and scribes were suspicious and critical. God rejoiced. The summary point of both parables is joy as the result of repentance.

Lost Sheep: In the parable of the lost sheep, the Savior identifies repentance as the specific source of God's joy. *"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. His point is that there is immediate joy with God for each sinner who repents. In context, Jesus is contrasting the suspicion of the Pharisees and scribes for a sinner who is drawn to God to the unbridled Joy which God demonstrates. The lesson is obvious. The Savior is contrasting the suspicion and criticisms of the pharisees and scribes to God's joy over repentant sinners. Suspicion of those who are drawn to Jesus is ungodly. God's joy over one sinner who repents doesn't mean that he has no joy over the ninety-nine. He has abiding joy from the obedience of the just.

Lost Silver: The parable of the lost piece of silver also points to God's joy for sinners who repent. However, with the development of this second parable the pattern of Jesus' judgment concerning the Pharisees and scribes becomes more apparent. The Savior's use of examples depicting commodities and finance reveals that the Pharisees and scribes were out of touch with spiritual things. Jesus used things of monetary value to force their understanding of the value that God places on his people. They had become so cynical that they could not even understand why God would rejoice over the actions of a penitent sinner. Therefore, Jesus used examples that were dear to the covetous hearts of his critics.

As an aside, the subtle difference in the accounts of joy in heaven with regard to the two parables is a source of interesting contemplation. The parable of the lost sheep describes joy in heaven. The parable of the lost silver describes joy in the presence of the angels of God. The first joy denotes a general joy among all the inhabitants of heaven. The second joy denotes the specific joy of the Godhead. It is the Godhead who is in the sight (presence) of the angels in heaven. There is universal joy in heaven when one sinner repents.

Prodigal Son, Unjust Steward

The Savior continues his instruction to his followers and response to his critics with two more parables. They are the parables of the prodigal son and the unjust steward. In these, the Savior presents both similarities and contrasts between the just and unjust. He reveals that similarities exist. For instance, both the prodigal son and the unjust steward were willing sinners. They possessed the same carnal motivations. Both were motivated by lust. However, their reactions, when faced with the consequences of their sins, were different. One repented, the other finagled.

Prodigal Son: The prodigal son was a willing sinner. Not only so, he was devious. When he demanded his inheritance from his father he did not reveal his reasons for so doing. He took all his possessions, left his father and entered a far away land of broad expanses and unmarked borders. He quickly exhausted his inheritance. At the same time his resources ran out, the calamity of a famine struck the land. His circumstance was perilous.

His first reaction to the peril was to develop a scheme which would deliver him from starvation. He decided to get a job feeding swine. He figured to himself that until he had money he could eat hog food. He supposed that his employer, aware of his desperate condition, would allow him to eat hog food until he had money to buy more suitable sustenance. His plan failed. His employer did not offer him swine food. Actually things were worse for him. He was now expending more energy feeding the swine, but was still without rations!

Finally, the prodigal's sanity returned. He came to himself. He remembered that his father's hired servants were treated better than he, as a hired servant, was being treated. He decided to return home and ask his dad for a job.

As he approached home, his father, who had ministering servants on the lookout for his wayward child, got news of his return. He ran out to meet his errant son. The prodigal had previously reasoned that he had offended his father's good name in the presence of God. He confessed his sins. His father rejoiced that his son, who in fellowship had been as a dead person, was safely returned. He rejoiced that his son who had been lost in the broad expanse of a borderless country was now found in the safe company of his family. The father was so moved by his joy that he dressed the wayward son in his own clothes. He gave him a ring to signify to all that he was his father's son. He placed his own robe upon his son. He put sandals upon his son's feet which the father had once worn. In every way, the prodigal bore evidence that he was his father's son. The father had a party so that all his family, friends and servants could rejoice with him that his son had returned.

The other brother was not so joyful. He was suspicious. He compared his father's joy at the return of his brother to his father's calmer attitude toward him. He was not happy. The father addressed the fears of his older son. He pointed out that the younger son's return was not a threat to the older son. He reassured him that the younger son's presence would in no way diminish the older sons inheritance. (A subtle implication is made by the Savior with regard to the older son having never been given a party. The younger son's party was because he had repented. The anger and suspicion of the older son is indication that he also needed to repent. The implication is: The older son was impenitent. Therefore there was no occasion for his father to rejoice by giving him a party).

There are many lessons contained in this parable. However, we will only address the issue at hand; which is the necessity of repentance. The prodigal willfully sinned. He had a Job experience as the result of his sinning. Providential deliverance was withdrawn. The Savior relates calamity to willful sinning. He reveals the utter insanity of those who willfully commit sins. He indicates that when one pursues a course of sinning he reaps the subsequent calamitous consequences. He teaches that pragmatic rationalized schemes will not effect deliverance. His message is that only repentance can effect deliverance from the consequences of one's sinning. He reveals that the suspicion and anger of the older son is evidence that he was impenitent.

Unjust Steward: The Savior became more pointed with His criticism, hardening his message against the Pharisees in relating the parable of the unjust steward. He raises the specter that impenitence and unforgiveness may be an indication that one is not saved. The steward was unjust. He lacked justification. He was not saved. This parable is not about a disobedient child of God. It is about how reprobates cope with the temporal consequences of their sins. It is a warning to God's children about the futility of attempting to use the reprobate's methods. He had embezzled money from his master and was about to be fired. The master had called for the accounts. Under Jewish custom, for a master to call for an accounting of his assets at any time other than the conclusion of harvest was tantamount to calling his steward a thief. The result was that either the steward would immediately quit because his integrity had been called to question, or else he would be fired because he had embezzled. In either case the outcome was always the same. The steward's employment ended.

The unjust steward was a thief. He was about to be unemployed. He weighed his options and decided that he was too good to do manual labor or to beg. He devised a plan which, though it was legal, was immoral. He used situational ethics as a means to insure that he would continue to eat. The unjust steward renegotiated his rich master's debts. He could do this because he was the steward of his master's estate. Negotiating contracts was part of his job. He lowered the amounts that his master's debtors owed. His thinking was that by allowing the debtors to pay less they would be so grateful to the unjust steward that they would provide him food and shelter until he could find another suitable job.

It is not necessary that we suppose the lesson of the unjust steward. The Savior explains the point he is making. He is addressing the futility of pragmatic reasoning and schemes as methods of deliverance from conviction and consequence of sinning. He states to both his followers and critics: *"The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."* Luke 16:8-9.

This statement by Jesus does not indicate that God approved of the actions of the unjust steward. First of all, the rich man in the parable does not represent anything other than a master with an unjust steward in his employment. Secondly, he did not commend the unjust steward for cheating him out of income from his debtors. The rich man complimented, probably grudgingly, the unjust steward's skillful shrewdness in finding a temporary solution to the mess he was in. The statement, *for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*, indicates the basis for the rich man's commendation. He realized that the steward was skilled at using worldly wisdom to solve problems. Further, the statement identifies the unjust steward as a child of the world. God has never instructed his children to adopt the behaviors of the children of wrath. To do so would be an admission by God that in some instances carnal reason is more profitable than godliness.

Let's examine Christ's summation of the parable. *"And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."* This statement is not an endorsement of the situational ethics of pragmatic reasoning. To the contrary it is a statement of the utter worthlessness, the failure, of pragmatic reasoning as a remedy for sinning. Jesus is not suggesting that anyone make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness as a means of gaining deliverance from failures. His statement points out that those who do make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness will experience failures. A brief word study of the phrase *mammon of unrighteousness* will prove this point.

The word mammon is derived from *mammonas*, a Hebrew word of Chaldean origin. According to Strong's it is defined as: *wealth personified; avarice deified*. Unrighteousness is from the Greek word *Adikia*. It is defined: *(legal) injustice (properly the quality of injustice, by implication the act), moral wrongfulness (of character, life or act): iniquity, unjust unrighteousness, wrong*. From these definitions it may be concluded that mammon of unrighteousness is the idolatry of placing confidence in wealth. It is worshipping wealth as a god. It is the worship of avarice, which is a covetous or inordinate affection for wealth. By extension it is the idolatry of placing faith in temporal things, rather than God, as the means for attaining security in one's life.

The unjust steward saw financial manipulation as a pragmatic solution to his concern for security. First, he embezzled from his rich master as a means to attain wealth in order to assure himself a modicum of security. When that didn't work he transferred the rich man's wealth to his debtors in the hope of gaining security from them.

The parable reveals that the steward's first scheme failed. He got caught. The Savior's testimony indicates that his second scheme was doomed to failure also. When Jesus stated the words, *when ye fail*, he infers the certainty of failure, not its potential. The outcome of trusting in riches is failure. This is what Jesus was saying.

The phrase, *that they may receive you into everlasting habitations*, describes the outcome of the failure. Everlasting is the Greek word *Alonios*. It means: *perpetual*. The Greek word for habitations is *skene*. It means: *a tent or cloth hut*. Together the phrase means perpetual cloth huts. The phrase had special meaning to the Jews. As the father of the nation

of Israel, Abraham's search for a city with a foundation established the cultural regard that Israel placed upon deliverance from a nomadic existence. Further, Israelites could associate living in tents with disobedience since they lived in tents while wandering in the wilderness for forty years because of their sin of unbelief. To a Jew, the phrase *alonios skene* meant perpetual temporary housing. It intimated continuous unsettlement. It described constant insecurity. It was a wilderness experience. Only this time it was personal and also lacked God's providential deliverance of safety and sustenance.

Jesus was saying that those who trust in riches for deliverance are doomed to constant insecurity. In context, riches may be defined as faithfulness to worldly solutions. The sin is idolatry. Idolatry may be defined as the worship of dependence upon anything other than God as a source for deliverance and security. The broader point is that relying on anything other than God for providential deliverance is idolatry.

Reprobates do not rely upon the ethics of godly morality for providential deliverance. They are consumed with fulfilling the lusts of the flesh by whatever means, in their constant search for anything that can make them feel secure. The unjust steward was doomed to a lifetime of seeking security through his carnal wiles. However, the child of God can repent of his sins and seek deliverance from God. When the prodigal son regained his sanity he immediately saw the futility of depending upon worldly riches to be secure. He had lost his own riches; and, his scheme to use other men's wealth to be delivered from starvation had failed.

Jesus' final point, with regard to the parable of the unjust steward, was directed at the unfaithfulness of Pharisees and scribes. As leaders of the Israelites they were guilty of lowering the standard of righteousness. In this they were like the unjust steward. He had lowered the standard of payment contained in the legal contract of the rich man's debtors by writing new unauthorized contracts. The Pharisees and scribes had lowered the standard of righteousness by perverting the purpose of the law and by creating hundreds of unauthorized fences. The purpose of the law, according to Paul, was to reveal sin as being exceedingly sinful, Romans 7:12-13. The Pharisees were teaching that its purpose was to establish righteousness and that maintaining their fences made one even more righteous. The Pharisees shifted people's focus away from God, who is the only standard of righteousness, toward a distorted and perverse works system.

The unjust steward could claim legal grounds for his actions because he was entrusted with the rich man's estate. However, because of his motives, his actions were immoral. The Pharisees used the perverted law as their authority to impose false rules and regulations on the people. Their motives were to prove their own righteousness as keepers of the law compared to people who did not keep the law because they no longer understood it. The fences actually represented a lowering of the standard of righteousness because they contributed to changing the function of the law.

The Religion of the Pharisee: Self-justification

After the parable of the unjust steward, the scribes and Pharisees deride Jesus. He responds with this condemnation. *"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."* Luke 16:15-18.

The Savior's statement immediately identifies the motives of his critics. They sought to justify themselves to other men. They were disciples of comparative religion. They established themselves as the standard bearers of righteousness. However, the Savior deflated their pretence. He noted that the kingdom of God was now being preached. He pointed out that everyone who enters into this kingdom, and thereby fellowship with God, does so in precisely the same way. They press in. His statement is an indictment of his critics. He was attacking their religious system. They believed that the law was the way to fellowship with God, and they were in control of the law. Jesus said they must press into fellowship with God in precisely the same way that sinners and publicans pressed in, by repentance and faith toward God.

In the middle of all this the Savior made a statement concerning divorce and remarriage constituting adultery. Without some understanding of the debates of the day it is difficult to understand what relationship this statement has to his dialogue. It relates to the issue of the Pharisees' hypocrisy in their treatment of the law. In order for the sect of the Pharisees to maintain their position of authority they listened to what the people wanted and then would reinterpret the law to reflect their will. Most often, their tactic was to recite the positions of various rabbinic schools and allow the people to accept whichever position suited them. If they wanted righteousness the Pharisees would offer it by the law and fences. If they wanted divorce, the Pharisees could manage that also.

In the latter years of the Jewish society, particularly under Roman rule, the Jews wanted to divorce and remarry. However, divorce and remarriage was against the law. It was adultery. The Pharisees sought and found what they believed was a loophole. Moses had granted bills of divorcement. Now all the Pharisees had to do was to find grounds for divorce that were acceptable. If they could, they could circumvent the law with a fence that kept divorce and remarriage from breaking the law. They relied upon an ongoing debate between two rabbinic schools as the tool for obscuring what the law stated concerning divorce and remarriage.

During Christ's ministry two opposing rabbinic schools, the Shammai and Hillel were engaged in full-fledged debate over the issue of what constituted lawful divorce and remarriage. The dispute was about acceptable causes for putting a wife away. Specifically, it centered around the interpretation of two words in Deuteronomy 24:1. The two words are favour and uncleanness. *"When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in*

his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife."

The Shammai school attempted to define uncleanness objectively by connecting it to fornication. The problem with this was that under the law uncleanness from fornication was subjective. Sometimes it was punishable by death, sometimes a fine was levied, sometimes marriage was required. For instance, in a city, if a betrothed virgin was discovered lying with a man they were both stoned. If the same act occurred in the country only the man was stoned. If a virgin who is not betrothed was discovered lying with a man the man paid her father fifty shekels and married the damsel. If a man and woman who were married to others committed fornication they were stoned. Exceptions based upon circumstances and motives made it difficult for the Shammai to objectively define uncleanness. Their case was further weakened by the fact that if someone committed an act of fornication which the Shammai could define as producing uncleanness and thereby allowing divorce, its penalty under the law was death by stoning. This all but eliminated any circumstance by which a person could divorce and remarry. In turn, this created a paradox for the Shammai: Their position flew in the face of Moses' bill of divorcement. They could not interpret the law to allow divorce, and yet Moses allowed bills of divorcement. They were faced with the dilemma of subjectively redefining what constitutes objective uncleanness for every potential circumstance.

The Hillel interpretation of the Law had the same effect of eliminating repentance for adultery. Their position rationalized adultery, and thereby sin, by allowing the husband to subjectively define his wife's uncleanness based upon his no longer favoring her. If a husband disfavored his wife for any reason, thereby making her unclean to him, he committed no sin by putting her away and marrying another. Therefore, he had no reason to repent because according to Hillel interpretation of the Law no sin was committed.

Both positions eliminated the potential for those who committed adultery to repent. In the case of the Shammai, the only acceptable reason for putting away and remarrying was fornication which did not constitute a commission of sin. If a man put his wife away for any other reason and married another, he was guilty of adultery and fornication. According to the Shammai interpretation of the letter of Mosaic Law, both the man and his new wife, who by Shammai interpretation were not lawfully married, could be stoned to death for committing fornication. There could be no repentance if the law was carried out because the offenders were dead. And, if the strict letter of Mosaic Law was not carried out there still was no call for repentance because legally, the offenders were judged to be worthy of death for their sins and could not repent.

The Hillel interpretation provided a subjective definition for uncleanness which had the effect of disassociating sin from putting away and marrying another (adultery). By relying upon rationalized, back-door logic their interpretation eliminated adultery as a sin without ever directly addressing it.

Both schools missed the point of the law. God hates putting away (Malachi 2:16). The Savior noted that Moses *suffered* (Matthew 19:8) divorce because of the hardness of the heart that occurs when people who oppose one another remain together. The fact that God allowed divorce did not mean that divorce was not a sin. In fact, the wording of the law provides insight into the only circumstance in which putting away is not sinful. That circumstance is adultery. In every other circumstance a sin is committed when a husband or wife puts his or her spouse away. In every other circumstance of putting away whomever commits the sin of divorce must seek godly repentance or else suffer permanent loss of fellowship with God along with the daily blessings of the joy of His salvation. Impenitent divorcees do not have fellowship with God.

The reason the Pharisees kept posing the question of adultery to the Savior was to trap Him. They knew that if He took the position held by the Shammai school it would alienate the disciples of the more popular Hillel. Divorce was very popular in Israel during the Savior's ministry. On the other hand, if He took the Hillel position the Pharisees could accuse Him of breaking the law. They thought they had him in either case. If He supported the Shammai position He trampled on Hillel fences. If He took the Hillel position He trampled down Shammai fences. Jesus trampled everyone's fences by simply restating the law. He focused squarely upon the sin of putting away. He noted that the sin is putting away. God hates divorce.

The fact that the two schools existed indicates the Pharisees' tolerance of the Hillel position. Had they wanted to, they had the power to alienate any scholar who held the Hillel position. They did not do so because the debate strengthened their own position. As mediators of the debate they were seen as sort of judges of the issue. They used the debate to pit one side against the other. This way they could use whichever position was to their benefit.

This was pure hypocrisy. They would not allow a chair to be dragged across the floor on the Sabbath because the furrow that it made in the dirt was similar to the furrow of a plow. Thus, dragging a chair in the dirt could lead to plowing on the Sabbath. To have such narrowly defined fences for the Sabbath and then ride the fence in a debate about what constitutes lawful divorce proves that the Pharisees were selectively using the law for their own purposes. They were using it, and sometimes ignoring it, to justify themselves before men.

It is a curious aside that Jesus raised the issue of adultery right in the middle of a discussion of repentance and forgiveness. Evidently, the Savior believed that adultery, as He defines it, the action of putting away and marrying another, could be repented of and forgiven.

The hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes points to the fact that they had lowered the standard of righteousness to a level that, in their own minds, they could attain. They had perverted the law in order to use it to their benefit. They hid its purpose with all their fences. Then they used the fences to identify people who were less righteous than they. As

such, sinners and publicans were a source of perverse self-gratification to the Pharisees and scribes. Thus, it was the Pharisees' custom to begin their prayers with this statement: *"I thank God I am not as other men."* They made a show of their false religion. *"But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi."* Matthew 23:5-8.

In the vanity of his self-righteous pride the Pharisee could not repent because he could not admit to sinning. To admit to committing sin was an admission that he was no different than the publican and sinner. He needed sinners sinning in order to prove himself righteous. By claiming to keep a law and the fences that sinners could not keep, the Pharisee proved to others that he was more righteous. If just anyone could understand, much less keep, the law and the fences, then the Pharisee was not so special. He was less righteous. It was in his own interest for sinners to sin. Therefore he kept building fences and reinterpreting the ones already built. Disdaining those who did not keep the fences made the Pharisee look more righteous. Outwardly he would decry the sinfulness of sinners. But inwardly, in a perverse way, he was glad that there were sinners around. They made him look good.

As the dominant religious sect in Israel, the Pharisees were able to eliminate repentance as an ethic of Jewish faith. As we have noted, they could not themselves admit to committing sins so they did not practice true repentance. If the publican and Pharisee of Luke 18:10-14 both went up to the temple to seek justification, it is evident that the Pharisee saw himself justified by means other than confessing his sins and asking for forgiveness. Further, Pharisees hindered sinners from repenting by refusing to forgive sins. *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."* Matthew 23:13. The penitent sinner was looked upon by the Pharisees and scribes with suspicion and scorn; never with compassion and mercy. *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."* Matthew 23:23. Many times in scripture this scene is repeated: in the midst of the very act of a sinner repenting, a Pharisee expresses scorn because the Savior shows compassion. Certainly, our text in Luke 15:1 demonstrates this. The episode recorded in Luke 7:36-50, of Simon the Pharisee and the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, is another example. In practice, the Pharisees did not want people to repent of their sins. They promoted non-repentance by their actions. As the most powerful religious sect in Israel, the Pharisees dominated Jewish culture. Through their dominance and religion of self-justification, never admitting that they committed sins and never having mercy or compassion upon those who did confess their sins, the Pharisees imposed a culture of unforgiveness upon God's people.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

Still engaging his disciples, the Pharisees and scribes and the publicans and sinners, the Savior next presented the account of Lazarus and the rich man. Whether one believes the account to be a parable or fact does not change its impact. When Christ taught in parables He did not use circumstances which were conceptually inaccurate. Every parable is based upon principles of reality. There are no parables recorded in scripture which depict fairy princes, or flying monkeys. Everything about the account, whether it actually occurred or not is conceptually accurate. Heaven really exists and so does hell. God can really communicate with the inhabitants of hell and He can hear their suffering. In heaven, the righteous really do rest in the Father. There really is a great gulf fixed between heaven and hell which neither the wicked nor the righteous can span. If any of this is not so then the Savior purposely misled His people as to the characteristics of heaven and hell.

The lesson of Lazarus and the rich man teaches that the wicked do not repent. The rich man did not repent on earth nor in hell. His thinking did not turn from self to God. It is improbable that the rich man actually believed that a few drops of water would actually give him any real relief from the unquenchable fires of hell. He spoke to Father Abraham to solicit sympathy for his condition. When that did not work he feigned concern for his brothers' destiny as a ploy to encourage Father Abraham to rethink His judgement against the rich man. His expressions of concern for his brothers were probably insincere. He now expressed compassion for others as a ruse to convince Abraham that he had somehow changed. Even in the pit of hell, the wicked continue to rely upon pragmatic reasoning.

Father Abraham's response indicates the utter failure of man's carnal nature to seek repentance. The rich man's brethren had not believed the prophets nor Moses; neither would one returning from the dead cause them to repent. The point of this is that logically, man will not seek repentance. No matter how catastrophic he may believe the consequence of his actions, he will not turn away from himself and toward God as the logical thing to do. If all the reasoning faculties a man has is carnal logic he will never repent. Pragmatic reasoning will never draw a sinner to the resurrected Christ.

This points to the fact that while there is persuasive power in the message of the gospel, the logic of gospel argument alone will not bring saved sinners to repentance. The message must be empowered by the Holy Ghost before sinners will cry out, "What would you have me do?" This is why preachers must themselves be penitent. Unless the preacher is penitent he will never preach a Holy Ghost empowered message of repentance.

The rich man in hell is evidence that the reasoning of pragmatic thinking is ungodly. Even from hell he continued to seek temporary deliverance. Listen to pragmatic reasoning from the pit of hell. *"Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."* Luke 16:24. The rich man reasoned that a few drops of water would ease his suffering. At best, this was a temporary remedy. But the fact is that God's wrath against the wicked cannot be quenched. No amount of cool water can quench,

or even cool by one degree, the fires of hell. Even in a place where the failure of pragmatic carnal reason is forever and constantly revealed, the rich man used it to attempt a temporary deliverance. The wicked will never learn. They will never turn to God.

Jesus used the account of Lazarus and the rich man as a severe condemnation and startling admonition. To those among the Pharisees and scribes who were suspicious of penitent sinners, were themselves impenitent, and would remain so, it revealed God's eternal condemnation. If they had not repented as the result of the calls of Moses, Jeremiah and John, they would not repent after Christ returned from the dead. Even in hell, understanding the pain and duration of God's wrath against them, they still will not repent. To his disciples and the penitent sinners and publicans it was a startling admonition: If they lost the spirit of repentance they would lose fellowship with God. The joy of salvation would be gone. The assurance of the hope of eternal life and the consolation it produces would cease.

The ethics of carnal reasoning, of rationalizing sin rather than seeking repentance through godly sorrow, places the just in the same experiential situation of miserable insecurity as the unjust. If the sinners and publicans forsook repentance, their life experience, less providential deliverance and assurance of salvation, would be identical to the reprobate. It would be perpetual insecurity. Until the prodigal son came to himself he was in the same miserable mental condition as the unjust steward. Pragmatic reasoning did not work for either of them. The prodigal found no deliverance because he was not as adept at carnal reasoning as the unjust steward. This is because of the warfare of the flesh. His conscience accused him and thereby inhibited his use of carnal logic. However, the unjust steward, who was an expert at carnal thinking, had only slightly more success. His deliverance from calamity was both tenuous and temporary.

Repentance and Forgiveness: Seven Times a Day

The Savior ended his discourse with instructions to his followers about the Christian ethics of repentance and forgiveness. He stated *"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."* Luke 17:3-4.. This statement expands the functionality of repentance beyond fellowship with God to fellowship with one another. Jesus' words indicate that Christians are to practice repentance and forgiveness among themselves in precisely the same way that it is practiced with God. Just as repentance is a foundational doctrine of Christ Jesus which governs a child of God's fellowship with the Father, it also governs our fellowship with one another. Just as the Father forgives his children each time they turn from wickedness and repent, we are to also forgive one another. This must be so or else there is a higher standard of righteousness than God. If God does not withhold his forgiveness and resulting fellowship from one who repents, having committed evil against Him, how can we, who ourselves are sinners, withhold forgiveness and fellowship from one who repents of his trespasses against us? Our justification for refusing to forgive cannot be from God. He forgives penitent sinners. It must be self-justification.

Jesus knew it was self-justification. That is why he made the point of forgiving seven times in a day. The idea of someone offending, repenting, and being forgiven seven times in a day strained the apostles concept of Christian behavior. They said to Jesus; *"Increase our faith."* Jesus' responded by reminding them of the nature of the mustard seed. *"If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you."* Luke 17:6.. The Lord's statement is a revelation of the quality of faith. The apostles were asking for more faith. Jesus replied that if they were as true to their new creature identity as a grain of mustard is to its identity as mustard they could move trees! The mustard seed is completely faithful to its parent, the mustard plant. It exactly reproduces itself in the image of the plant from which it is produced. Jesus was saying that if the child of God would exactly conform himself to the image of the seed within, which is of the Father, all things are possible. In other words, Jesus was telling the apostles that there was nothing wrong with the quality of their faith. The problem was with their exercising it. They were not completely faithful to the holy character of their new creature identity. None of us are. The point of all this is that Jesus' instruction to forgive seven times in a day is perfectly reasonable based upon the qualities of faith and the abilities, when exercised, that it produces in a child of God.

The apostles' request for increased faith identifies the relationship of faith, repentance and forgiveness. Repentance and forgiveness are faithful activities. They are works of faith. The faithless can neither repent nor forgive. It is the faithful who repent and forgive. When a child of God refuses to repent, or refuses to forgive one who is penitent it is because his faith is weak. Thus, both impenitence and unforgiveness are evidences of unbelief. Repentance and forgiveness, as faithful expressions, require fellowship with God. One cannot repent of his trespass against a brother, neither can the offended brother or sister forgive unless they are secure in the hope of their salvation.

The scenario which Jesus described, of a brother offending seven times, and seeking and gaining forgiveness seven times in a day, reveals the divine quality of forgiveness. In such circumstance most of us would question the sincerity of the repeat offender. Jesus says don't do it. God alone is able to look into the heart of man. He alone is able to judge our motives with infallibility. In this regard Jesus was saying, "You are to focus on the ethics of repentance and forgiveness. I will judge motive." Also, the seven times scenario demonstrates the higher standard of righteousness which is attained in Christ. The apostles knew that their tolerance for forgiving ended well before seven times. They knew they must depend upon help from God to go beyond the limit of human patience for offenders. Jesus gave us the example. On the cross, even before they sought repentance, Jesus asked the Father to forgive his tormentors. That day, far more than seven sins were committed against him. Divine patience extended beyond every sin committed by every one for whom he died. Forgiveness is an ethic of our eternal deliverance. Through repentance it is also an ethic for fellowship with

God while we are yet in the world. Further, it is a vital behavior of Christian fellowship. Without repentance and forgiveness Christians have neither fellowship with God nor one another.

Unprofitable Servant

Jesus closed his remarks with an example of an unprofitable servant. He presents the picture of a hired servant who works all day in the field, then returns to the master's house and prepares his master's meal. He points out the master did not call upon his servant to rest while he prepared the meal. Even though the servant had worked hard all day, from the perspective of the master, the servant did only what was expected and nothing more. The Savior likens the hard day's labor of seeking repentance from God and forgiving those who trespass against us to an unprofitable servant. *"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."* Luke 17:10. This statement clearly establishes the fact that God's servants must esteem themselves least. It reveals that even our best efforts, when compared to God, are unprofitable. Nothing we do makes God more God. Therefore, objectively we are unprofitable. This is the most that any minister can say about his service. Boasting is excluded. Doing anything less than what we are commanded to do makes us less than unprofitable. One who esteems himself as God's unprofitable servant will not become self-righteous. He will look upon all his efforts, every word he speaks and even his thoughts as unprofitable and therefore unrighteous. He cannot justify himself by God's standard. And because he sees himself as the least among the saints he cannot measure himself by himself. He sees himself as an object of reproach and Jesus as an object cherished. He counts all as lost that he might win Christ. And when his service is ended he says with Paul, *"to live is Christ, but to die is gain."* Thus, even death is blessing to the unprofitable servant.

With this example the Savior drove home the error of the Pharisees and scribes. There is no circumstance by which anyone can justify himself by any measure of justification. Even the most devoted servant is never anything more than unprofitable. The hypocrisy of the self-justified leaders of Israel was revealed by their attitudes. They exalted themselves. They imposed burdens upon others. *"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."* Matthew 23:2-4. It was in response to harsh arrogance and heavy burdens, which by impenitence and unforgiveness, the self-righteous impose upon God's people, that Jesus offered rest to penitent sinners. *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* Matthew 11:28-29.

The self-righteous never cease their labors of self-righteousness. They must ever justify themselves before men. They will continue to lay burdens upon God's people as long as they are allowed. As long as God's children agree to shoulder the unholy burdens of impenitence and unforgiveness, self-righteous religionists will continue to impose their creeds of comparative religion. However, there is a rest for the people of God. Paul indicates that it is reserved for those who cease from their own labors. *"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."* Hebrews 4:10-11.

Conclusion

Up until John the Baptist came preaching repentance the Lord had not spoken to his people since the prophet Malachi. By the mouth of this last prophet of the Old Testament God laid out the sins of Israel and called upon his people to repent. He posed the question to his children; *"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?.....O priests, that despise my name?"* Malachi 1:6. God continued his indictment of impenitent Israel by revealing how they despised his name: *"Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say the table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts Malachi 1:7-8* Finally God expresses his response to their unholy service. *"I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand."*

God assigned special condemnation to the priests, the spiritual leadership of Israel, for leading his people into such a contemptible condition. *And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.....For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law."*

Seven times in the Book of Malachi the Lord calls upon Israel to repent. Seven times they deny that they have sinned. Thus, the last Old Testament call to repentance is made. Repentance is rejected by Israel. *"Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said Wherein shall we return?"* Malachi 3:7. God concluded the call to repent by announcing the end of prophetic fellowship with Israel. *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."*

Then, for four-hundred years the Lord remained silent. He did not speak to His people Israel. During the Father's great silence two things occurred. A spirit of slumber came upon Israel. The sect of the Pharisees gained in popularity and power. Phariseeism began with noble intentions. The word means "the Separatists." They desired to separate themselves from the polluted worship which God condemned by the prophet Malachi. It was started by men who wished to return to a strict interpretation of orthodoxy of Mosaic law. Their intentions, at least on the surface, were noble. But their good intentions went awry because they continued their work after God stopped speaking to them. They devised their doctrine of fences during this period. Self-righteousness flourished.

During this time of prolonged silence a stasis of spiritual stagnation developed in Israel. God was not speaking to the people through prophets. All they had was the law; so they made it their god. There was a flurry of activity but no growing in grace and knowledge. The Pharisees threw themselves into interpreting and reinterpreting the law. They devoted themselves to developing their "it could lead to" doctrine of building fences around the law.

At the same time the Pharisees were building fences around the law they began the practice of analyzing genealogies to identify their lineages. They reasoned that since the priest must have a certain lineage in order to be priest that lineage had something to do with one's ability to interpret the law and rule God's people. Thus, they used their own lineages to make claims of authority in interpreting the law through the practice of building fences. This was more than simple record keeping. They memorized their genealogies, frequently reciting them to others. They stressed purity and famous ancestors. In general, the farther back one could trace a family tradition of membership in the sect of the Pharisee the more respect his pronouncements were given. Thus, a perverse informal cultural belief developed that one's ancestry contributed to his claims of righteousness. This error contributed to the attitude of elitism which developed among the Jews; and, upon which Paul focused in many of his epistles by repeatedly stressing the point that there was no difference between Jews and Gentiles.

Thus, in a stasis which occurred during four hundred years of divine silence a legalism of "it could lead to" fence building, and a traditionalism of claiming authority based upon ancestry replaced true worship. In dedicating themselves to devising new fences for the law, the Pharisees placed great burdens of observance on the people. They used their doctrine of fences to bind them with ever tightening interpretations of the law; while intimating that their bloodlines back to Abraham gave them the authority to do so.

The spiritual stagnation of a religious culture steeped in legalism and traditionalism is identified and condemned in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul told both Timothy and Titus to avoid foolish questions about the law and endless genealogies. *"Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."* I Timothy 1:4. *"But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain."* Titus 3:9. The rule of classic application suggests special regard must be given to Paul's warning. He included it in divinely inspired epistles to preachers. The fact that Paul placed these warnings in epistles to both Timothy and Titus, the only gospel ministers to whom epistles were written, provides some understanding of the great potential which exists for ministers to be snared by legalism and traditionalism. We are highly susceptible to these particular sins.

Paul identified the stagnation of legalism which had overtaken Israel in Hebrews 13:9. *"Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."* Notice, the Apostle used the study of the law of meats, the study of clean and unclean things, as an example of divers and strange doctrines. He stated that these studies were unprofitable and should be avoided. He contrasted the unprofitable study of the nuances of law, legalism, with grace. In contrast, grace is profitable.

John the Baptist upbraided the Pharisees for equating lineage with orthodoxy and authority. *"But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."* Matthew 3:7-9. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus' lineage, suggesting that he was conceived as the result of an act of fornication, the Savior condemned them. He identified the utter folly of claiming righteousness based upon lineage. *".... If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me..... Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do....."* John 8:39-44.

During the four-hundred years of divine silence there was one thing the Pharisees did not do. They did not notice that God was silent. God was silent and no one noticed. No one said; "Wait a minute. God is silent. How can we know we are doing the right thing if he is not communicating with us? We must be doing something wrong if God is not speaking to us. Let's stop everything, repent, and do the first work. Let's cry out to God until he answers us." They were so occupied with the affairs of the law and genealogies that they didn't notice that God was silent. All of the activities of developing numerous fences for the law and endless genealogies, and God kept quiet, and no one noticed. Amazing.

Self-righteousness produces the illusion of serving God. But the self-righteous do not rely upon God to define their service. They just need his name as a basis for their claims of authority. His person actually creates a problem for them. It suited the Pharisees just fine that God was silent. He was not thwarting their efforts; so they thought.

In the Hebrew letter, the writer admonished Christian Jews not to succumb to the pressures of legalism and traditionalism which were the twin engines of first century Jewish religious culture. He encouraged these early

Christians to go on to perfection. The action word of the Hebrew epistle is perfection. It appears twelve times. The functions of laboring for perfection, of growing in grace and Christian maturity, eliminates spiritual stasis. The Hebrew writer presents the daily task of pressing toward perfection as the antithesis of the spiritual stagnation of legalism and traditionalism. In chapters 5 and 6 he exhorts the Hebrew Christians that they must not fall into the comfortable trap of defining their Christianity based upon continuously re-establishing the doctrines of grace; thus, making the doctrine their religion. Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of grace is the true object of worship. Just as the Jews made the law their God, Primitive Baptists today face the potential of making our doctrine our religion, the church the central object of our worship, and mistaking the social affections we have toward one another as true fellowship; using all of this as evidences of divine blessings.

The principles of Christ Jesus are beautiful, but they do not compare with the beauty and glory of his person. *"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit."* Hebrews 5:12 - 6:3.

We must be established in the first principles of the doctrines of grace. Without them it is impossible to go on unto perfection. Without them one cannot grow in grace. They must be taught. However, the first principles are the starting point of discipleship. They are not an end to themselves. Cardinal principles of faith alone do not constitute true religion. They are abstract principles which express the concepts of grace. Christ requires his followers to become Christ-like not only in some measure of understanding but also in action. He expects his disciples to use their knowledge to his glory as faithful witnesses to the sufficiency of his blood in every circumstance of our lives. The Savior demands that His followers do the works of grace. He requires us to practice the ethics of Christianity. Unless the principles of grace are used as the basis for implementing the practices of grace they are useless.

The trap of focusing one's efforts on constantly re-establishing the first principles is one of Satan's most subtle devices. It genders a spiritual stasis not unlike that which produced a spirit of slumber among first century Jews; which, in turn, caused them to reject the Savior. And like first century Phariseism, spiritual stasis spawns competition and contention among preachers and membership alike. In the circumstance of spiritual stasis stagnation occurs in which religionists use knowledge of first principles, rather than repentance and faith toward God as manifest by the good works of true conversion, as the basis for measuring their righteousness. Knowledge of the nuances of doctrine, rather than good works, becomes the gauge of discipleship. Relying on a standard of doctrinal understanding as the measure of one's discipleship, absent the good works of faithful witnessing, creates an environment in which disagreement over doctrine, no matter how relevant or irrelevant, is interpreted as personal attack against one's worthiness as a follower of Christ. In this climate honest debate cannot occur. In such a climate the discipleship and sometimes even the eternal destiny of anyone whose beliefs do not exactly conform to those of the religionists, is suspect. Suspicion is expressed by questioning the motives behind their works and witnessing.

However, Christianity is not reserved for bible scholars. It is for workers; not for learners only, but for doers. Jesus thanked God that this was so. *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."* Luke 10:21.

The Hebrew writer summed up the importance of the ethics of Christian behavior in Hebrews Chapter 13. He listed some of the actions of striving for Christian maturity. *"Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers..... Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them..... marriage is honourable in all..... .Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have..... Remember them that have the rule over you."* The writer sent a clear message. Christianity is a doing religion. Those continuously occupied with meats (Hebrews 13:9) who are dedicated to continuously re-establishing the first principles, engage in unprofitable service. They are ensnared by religious stasis.

Before we can move on in spiritual maturity of discipleship in Christ Jesus, of worshipping and witnessing, we must be founded in the first principles as they are recorded in Hebrews 6:1-2. Further, such pressing into perfection requires that we first of all be soundly established in the primary first-principle, which is repentance from dead works and faith toward God alone. If your experience is anything like mine, if the Lord has been silent in your life for some period of time, it is time to repent and do again the first work. We must not allow the white noise static of the false religions of legalism and traditionalism to block out the thundering spiritual silence which testifies of our need for fellowship with God through repentance and faith.

Some have said that the church is in a period of gleaning, that revival and in-gathering is not possible. I do not believe that. I believe that God is still quite willing to send laborers into the field. However, until we overcome the pride of impenitence he will not do so. Until we confess our sins and beg God to forgive he will remain silent. Our churches will continue to decrease in membership and close their doors. Why would the Father call people to join us if we are not glorifying his name through repentance, faith, conversion and witness. God will not bless and increase a people who are more in love with the doctrines of grace than they are with Christ Jesus, the Person of Grace. He will not share his glory

with traditionalism nor legalism. Nothing can replace repentance, not legalism, not traditionalism, not newly devised isms.

The evidence of repentance will be manifold blessings. Each of us will be renewed in our love and devotion to God. The culture of unforgiveness and suspicion will disintegrate. All will be peace and love.

Throughout scripture and the history of Christianity, without exception, every revival began with the repentance of religious leaders. Without a penitent and converted ministry the church will not be delivered from our present condition. Spiritual stagnation will continue to foster unholy debate and divisive contentions. Intolerance and unforgiveness will continue to be dominant characteristics of our religious culture. Our behavioral ethics will continue to be formed by the principles of self-righteous comparative religion, to our eventual destruction. In all this, the poor and needy will continue to be ignored. The meek will continue to be devoured by the proud. God's sheep will not be fed.

Only when we again do the first works of love through repentance from our dead works and true faithfulness toward God, will He send revival. Penitent and converted ministers will again preach the doctrines of grace with power from the Holy Ghost. Transgressors will once again be taught the ways of God and sinners will again be converted. Fruit produced by the good works of exercising the ethics of Christian behavior will once again identify us to others as followers of the Lamb. Once again we will be blest to delight in the unlimited joy of Divine Salvation. Such knowledge is too wonderful. I cannot attain it. But God, who is rich in mercy, has attained it in Christ Jesus. Jesus has the victory. He freely gives it to us. In him we are more than conquerors.