

**Demystifying
Biblical
Repentance**

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There are Christians who are unsure of the biblical meaning of the words “repent” and “repentance”. As such, there has been a lot of confusion over this subject and believers are led to believe and act in the wrong way for misunderstanding biblical repentance as taught in the Holy Bible. Such confusion could lead some to put their faith on their repentance or doing nothing but pray and wait for God to grant them true repentance. The purpose of this book is to debunk such myths in hopes that Christians will live their Christian life in the right perspective as far as repentance is concerned. Thus, it is imperative that all the verses containing the verb “repent” and the noun “repentance” and other associated words derived from the word “repent” be closely examined for such a topic like this. May the Lord bless the study of His words!

The word “repentance” as found in the Holy Bible has been elevated unto a status where this doctrine is enshrined with some mystical and unexplainable concepts. Man-made standards, expectations and works become associated with repentance regardless of whether they have biblical support for such views. Two extremes become evident to those who like to dabble with the Scriptures mixing faith with secular wisdom from the fallen mind of men.

On one extreme, some believe that salvation of the souls of men are based on repentance, meaning one must repent of his sins to be saved apart from the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. The preaching of the cross of Christ is more or less incidental where emphasis is based on repentance, the outward form required from the penitent to work for his own salvation having been enlightened to his true condition as a sinner deserving hell fire for his sins. This is where the system of salvation is based on works as all false teachers teach. Those who embrace this teaching are not saved for his faith is not based on Christ but on his own repentance. The gospel of Christ simply awakes the need to repent for the salvation of his soul. Hence, there is no true assurance of salvation from those who believe such a doctrine as this salvation is man-centred and not Christ-centred. As such, false teachers have been installing man-made systems and standards by which a man must be measured against to determine whether he is truly saved. This is one of the best ways for cult groups to control a man because salvation is determined by the false teachers to keep him in the fold where hell fire is very real to him if he dares to deviate from their teachings. This system indeed keeps a man in bondage where the true gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ is cleverly hidden away from the sinner even though it is preached but man-made standards and traditions override the simplicity of the gospel in Christ. The gospel of Christ is just the beginning of salvation but real salvation really depends on the sinner to endure unto the end to be saved. This is where repentance is always put to the forefront to keep and help sinners remain saved.

On the other end, some realize that there is a need for repentance but found no way of repenting because of indwelling sin and hence they expect God to grant them true repentance. While it is true that apart from work of the Holy Spirit to convict the sinner of his sins, there is no way a sinner could repent in the truest sense of the word, but to expect God to grant him true repentance is going off on a tangent as far as the Scriptural term “repentance” is concerned. This is because such a notion to expect God to

grant him true repentance implies that God is withholding him from repenting and God owes it to him to grant him this “true repentance” he so desires. It could also imply that God has the obligation to do the repenting for him just like God the Father sending His only Begotten Son to die for his sin, God must also perform the repenting for him. This may be due to guilt from some sins he has sinned willfully and is unable to stop sinning and hence the constant crying out to God to grant him true repentance because all this while his repentance has been found to be faulty. This is the defeatist’s vain attempt in seeking solace in escapism in hopes of finding true repentance that is ever so illusive. As such, there is this constant prayer praying to God to grant him true repentance while he continues to live a life of sin and defeat as a blood bought child of God.

Such unscriptural practice could be the results of some bad teachings, particularly from Calvinism where God is so Sovereign that God will save His elect because sinners cannot respond by faith to God’s call of salvation. This false teaching extends to repentance where God must grant it otherwise there is no true repentance and hence the sinning in the flesh continues until such time God is pleased to grant this deluded believer ”true repentance”. Then why is God delaying granting “true repentance” to a Christian who prays regularly for it? Does it mean that God enjoys seeing His child wallowing in fake repentance? Does it mean that God has been granting men false repentance? The confusion starts when a Christian does not take the simple terms “repent” and “repentance” from the Scriptures according to the context in which they are used. Failing to allow Scriptures to speak for themselves, he starts erecting big words to enshroud “repentance” into some mystical doctrine beyond the reach of fallen men to respond to God’s call of salvation and holiness. Another reason why a Christian is confused with the biblical term “repentance” is because he fails to differentiate between salvation and sanctification. Whenever a Christian cannot tell the difference between the characteristics of the natural man and the new man in a believer, there is this confusion over the biblical term “repentance”.

The confusion over what is repentance and the verb “repent” associated with the noun “repentance” is self-conceited men’s insistence over how these words ought to be used. They will not allow Scriptures to use these words the way they are meant to be used but they claim that only sinners can and should repent and the verb “repent” cannot be used to refer to any other entity other than fallen men. This is not the case as far as Scriptural revelation is concerned. In fact, the first use of the term “repent” is used in connection with the Lord God “repenting” over what He had done and had allowed to happen: **And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. (Genesis 6:6&7)**

As far as repentance and repenting are concerned, there is not only a sense of grief; there is an acknowledgement of regrets and a change of mind to do something about what has happened. There is conscious effort and action to undo what has been done wrong. So here is the first use of the word “repent” and it is applied to the Creator God who is taking action to undo what should not have been allowed taking place. Of course the corrupted versions tell us otherwise and cleverly hide such simple truths from the serious Bible students.

6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them." (NIV)

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As a result of conceited men refusing to allow the term “repent” to be used from the point of view on God’s part, repentance becomes a confused and complicated topic where belly worshippers could make a living by teaching falsehood to gullible Bible students aspiring to become “wise” like their false teachers. It affects not only their understanding on what

repentance really means, it also affects the way they live their lives and unfortunately, some would become hell-bound trusting on their own repentance to save them and not Christ and Christ alone.

The second usage of the term “repent” is used by Jehovah God to prevent “repentance” from taking place. God used the term “repent” to describe the children of Israel who might change their mind concerning their march to the Promised Land: **And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 13:17&18)**

Here Jehovah God deliberately led the children of Israel in a direction that would avoid having the children of Israel having to confront the Philistines because the children of Israel would repent if they have to fight their enemies to cross into Canaan. This usage of the word “repent” not only indicates the change of mind on the part of the children of Israel, it has a far greater implication in that there will be an about turn in the direction of their march to Canaan. This 180-degree turn would cause the children of Israel to return to Egypt. So repentance cannot be without an equal and opposite reaction to a situation at hand resulting from a change of mind in the evaluation of the circumstances faced by the person. Therefore to repent means that there will be a change of mind and direction of the course one is traveling on due to a confrontation with a new situation or a new truth now made available to the person concerned. This term is used here to avoid a possible change of mind and the corresponding change of direction on the part of the children of Israel according to the foreknowledge of God. Repentance must be accompanied by action; otherwise, it has no meaning at all.

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. (Exodus 32:12&14) Moses who penned the first five books of the Old Testament of course understood what the verb “repent” was all about. He used the word “repent” to change the mind of

Jehovah God who was on the verge of destroying the children of Israel when they turned to worshipped the golden calf while waiting for Moses to return from the mount with God. One would normally associate the call to repent to be applied to sinners. But this is clearly not the case. Repent simply means to change one's mind and change one's intended action or course of direction. It is also equally applicable to God as well. Here we have a sinner, Moses, calling out to God to repent of His intention to kill the children of Israel. How audacious of Moses, one may think! Unless one is brainwashed by so called scholars to tell him what repentance really means, the term "repent" and "repentance" have no special application to be applied to sinners only. So interestingly, the call to repentance is issued to God. Not only the call to repentance is issued to God but God repented as well. God repented of His intention to kill the children of Israel though He is justified in doing so. Here God is teaching what repentance really means. When God repented, He changed His mind on what He wanted to do and He did not do it. Repentance involves the change of one's mind as well as the change in the course of action. So when evil man claims he has repented but does not stop what he claims he has repented from doing, his repentance is false.

While God is capable of repenting, and repenting does not always mean repenting from sin, there are times when God will not repent no matter what sinners try to do to change His mind about it. **God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)** Here is Balaam speaking about God would not repent of what He intends to do with regards to the children of Israel in fulfillment of prophecy concerning redemption of fallen men via the Jewish Messiah to come. This began as early as back in the Garden of Eden where Genesis 3:15 was declared: **And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.** God's kindness towards Adam's lost and helpless race would continue and to be carried out through the program God would work through the nation of Israel. This is non-negotiable and God would not repent about this matter. So no matter what Balak wished to do the children of Israel to cause them to be destroyed, God would not allow that to happen.

Throughout the history of the children of Israel, Jehovah God had threatened to destroy them several times. Eventually, God had to scatter the children of Israel but would not destroy them altogether. God will also

repent Himself for His servants in delivering the children of Israel during the times of their distress and calamities: **For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. (Deuteronomy 32:36)**

God is always watching over the children of Israel to preserve them a posterity because of what He has promised His servants. So whenever the children of Israel sinned against God, God would allow them to be afflicted by their enemies. Eventually God would take pity upon them and repent and deliver them when they called out to God for mercy: **And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. (Judges 2:18)**

Another case of the word “repent” is used as far as the change of mind and action is concerned is regarding the children of Benjamin. The other tribes had initially wanted to completely destroy the tribe of Benjamin for their gross sin and refusing to hand over the sinners to be punished. However, the children of Israel later repented of their plan to wipe out Benjamin. They even tried to help them out by getting wives for the six hundred men that were left from the tribe of Benjamin: **And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day. And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. (Judges 21:6&15)**

So it is folly to associate the word “repent” as repenting from sin all the time. Repent always means regrets and a change of mind with a corresponding change of the course of action. Only conceited Christians want to compartmentalize the words “repent” and “repentance” to be used in a certain way according to their own faulty understanding. Once the repentance of God is taken out of the picture, the definition of repentance becomes vague.

Hence, the Scriptures have to teach the true meaning of the words “repent” and “repentance” with God showing by examples what these words really mean. It is often claimed that king Saul was the people’s choice while king David was God’s choice to be king over Israel. This claim is fallacious and cannot stand on Scriptural evidence. When the children of Israel

requested Samuel to give them a king to rule over them just like the other nations around them, they got their first king, Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin: **Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people. (1 Samuel 9:15-17)**

God explicitly told Samuel who He wanted to be king over the children of Israel. Instruction was given to Samuel to anoint Saul to be king over the children of Israel. So Samuel faithfully carried out God's order to anoint Saul to be king: **Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? (1 Samuel 10:1)**

Not only was God responsible for anointing Saul to be king, initially, the people did not accept Saul to be king: **And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace. (1 Samuel 10:20-27)**

Actually, Saul was a very reluctant king. He went into hiding and did not want to be their king. Samuel had to convince them to look at the man

whom God had chosen to be their king in verse 24. Only a band of men followed Saul while the rest left and some even despised him. Can one claim that Saul was actually the people's choice to be their king and God was not responsible or involved in any way to cause this coronation to take place? Even the apostle Paul in the New Testament confirmed that God made Saul king: **And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. (Acts 13:21)**

Later it turned out that Saul became lifted up with pride and refused to obey God in exterminating the Amalekites. So the Lord was grieved and it repented Him to have anointed Saul to be king over Israel: **Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night. (1 Samuel 15:10&11)**

Does not the Lord have the right to repent and be grieved? One may argue that the Lord should have known better than to anoint Saul to be king over Israel. Such argument could go back all the way to the Garden of Eden that God foreknew the fall of man and yet allowed it to take place. This will cause Calvinists to go ballistic because this Sovereign God in His eternal counsel has authored or decreed the fall of man. Is God at fault? In a sense, yes! But the price that God has to pay is to send His only Begotten Son to die on the cross of Calvary to atone for the sin of the whole world! So if God had not given Saul a chance and allowed him to become king over Israel, how would Israel know their folly in wanting a king to rule over them and all the troubles that follow? Even king David was not infallible and without fault while reigning over Israel! Then after this episode, God changed His mind on Saul and looked to anoint another man to be king over Israel.

And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent. (1 Samuel 15:26-29) When God has made up His mind to do something, He would not repent. God has rejected Saul and is going to

anoint another man David to be the next king over Israel. So Saul was the first king chosen by God whom God later rejected. David was very clear about this matter so much so that he would not lay hand on God's anointed king. The man who thought he would be rewarded by claiming to have killed Saul was put to death by David in 2 Samuel 1. The Lord did indeed repent over choosing Saul to be king over Israel which is recorded again in 1 Samuel 15:35: **And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.**

Hence the word "repent" must not be strictly applied only to sinners to repent of their sins. This is not how the Holy Spirit wants the word to be used in the Holy Scriptures. Time and again, the Scriptures teach that God does and will repent over certain thing He has done because it grieves Him over what has happened. Another case is when God is executing judgment on the sin of David: **And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite. (2 Samuel 24:16) And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. (1 Chronicles 21:15)**

God has to punish sin but it also grieves Him as well. The Lord makes clear He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked as well: **For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 18:32; 33:11)**

God is not a sadist who rejoices in killing. But He is a holy God and holiness demands that He punishes sin. Ultimately, He has to turn His face from His only begotten Son who knew no sin but was made to be sin for sinners for the salvation of Adams' fallen race (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Having taught sinners what repentance is all about, the call to repent is now issued to fallen men: **If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them: For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron: That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee. (1 Kings 8:46-52)** This is Solomon's prayer prayed during the dedication of the first temple built in Jerusalem. His prayer anticipated the future repentance of the children of Israel for having forsaken the Lord and beseeching the Lord to take pity upon them.

If God is capable of repenting, men must also repent from sinning against the thrice Holy God. It is utter madness to claim that fallen men cannot repent and God must grant them "true repentance". If men cannot repent, the call to repent from God is fraudulent. Such nonsensical demand for God to grant "true repentance" to sinners cannot stand in the light of Scriptures. It makes a mockery to those who did repent like Job: **Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:6)** Imagine having been rebuked by God, Job turned around and asked God to grant him "true repentance"! This would be the greatest theological joke of all time! This is worse than adding insult to injury to the injured party!

God does expect men to repent. Repentance is the condition by which God will show mercy to the children of Israel. Solomon's prayer underlines the conditions where God is justified to deliver His people from bondage

and restore them. Repentance is required and when they repent, the Lord will hear them and have mercy upon them and save them. In fact, this truth is demonstrated many times in the book of Judges for whenever the children of Israel repented, God delivered them from bondage. When the children of Israel refuse to repent, there is no reason for God to repent. God would not deliver them from evil while they continue to sin against Him. To grant true repentance, as some suggest that God must, in spite of the continuance of rebellion and sin, is to mock at divine justice and impinge the holiness of the thrice holy God.

The Psalmist also understood that repentance works both ways. When the children of Israel repent of their sins, God repents of His judgment upon them. Hence the call for God to repent as well, not a repentance from sin, but a repentance to withhold judgment: **Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. (Psalms 90:13&106:45)**

It is true that the Psalmist and even the prophet Jeremiah did pray to God to turn them again back to God; this however, in no way implies that God is turning them back to Him without conditions of repentance. Some may confuse the Psalmist's prayer for God to turn them back to God as a prayer for God to grant them true repentance: **Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. (Psalms 80:3,7&19; 85:4)** Jeremiah also likewise beseeched God to turn them back unto God: **I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. (Jeremiah 31:18)** **Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. (Lamentations 5:21)**

But to equate such desires to be turned back unto God and to ask God to grant true repentance is simply not the case. A desire to repent and the request for God to grant true repentance are not the same. The Psalmist's prayers and Jeremiah's cries are part of fruits of repentance. The process of repentance has been initiated. The need to repent is clearly felt and

expressed. Such crying out to God is to ask for restoration to former state of blessing and not asking God to grant true repentance. Repentance and restoration must not be confused for they are not the same. Repentance is the act of the penitent while restoration is God's dispensing of mercy and grace to restore the penitent. In such a transaction, repentance is sealed with the sinner repenting of sins and transgression against God and God is justified to repent from continuing to inflict judgment on the sinner as understood by the Psalmist: **For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants. (Psalm 135:14)**

The cries to God to turn sinners again also show there are no merits on the penitent's repentance but to trust in God's mercy for restoration. The penitent has no right to demand God's mercy having offended the thrice holy God. The penitent has no right to demand God to show him mercy by pointing to God to look at his repentance as though there is any merit in his repentance. So for those trusting in their own repentance to save them have been deluded. There is no salvation apart from God showing sinners mercy on whom God will show mercy. This mercy is now found in His Son, who had died for sinners and is now sitting at the right hand of God the Father, interceding for those who would come to Him. The time when the penitent realizes he has sinned against God and as a sinner in need of salvation, he calls out to God to grant him mercy through Christ and God will repent from sending this sinner to hell fire that he justly deserves. So salvation is not Christ plus the sinner's repentance and dependence upon his repentance to keep him saved. Trusting our own repentance to save us is just as wrong as asking God to grant us true repentance.

However, when God is determined to fulfill prophecy concerning the redemptive plan of men, God will not repent to adjust His program according to the dictates of fallen men. This aspect cannot and will not involve men because fallen men have no merits to negotiate on when and how God must save them. God will have mercy on those whom He would have mercy. Men cannot dictate the terms by which God must show them mercy: **The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. (Psalm 110:4)** This truth is also reiterated by Paul in the New Testament: **(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) (Hebrews 7:21)** No one can insist that this great high priest who ever liveth to make intercession for sinners must continue to

come from the tribe of Levi. God does not have to answer to men on such matter.

There are also other instances where God will not repent of the evil He would inflict upon the rebels when the time given them to repent is over: **For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. (Jeremiah 4:27&28)**

God expects repentance from men and not that men ask Him to grant them repentance. This is clearly expressed when God spoke to Jeremiah lamenting that no man repented from wickedness. When sinners refuse to repent, God will not repent as well from delivering them from evil: **Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. (Jeremiah 8:4-6)**

While God is eager and willing to bless His people and deliver them from their enemies, when the line of transgression is crossed, God has no choice but to destroy His people for which He had already told them of old in the book of Moses: **And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest? Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting. (Jeremiah 15:4-6)**

Here God is even shown to be tired of repenting whenever the children of Israel called out to Him for help. This time, God will not repent of the evil He would do to Jerusalem for what king Manasseh had done. Judgment may be delayed but it will eventually come. God is in the business of repenting from inflicting evil on sinners depending on whether they would repent of their sins and transgression against Him: **If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of**

the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (Jeremiah 18:8-10)

So God is not only of capable of repenting from inflicting evil on nations, He is also ready to repent of blessing that nation with His goodness that would benefit them. Thus the word “repent” does not always mean repenting from sins. It could also mean repenting from doing good that God promises He would do to people who forsake Him.

While God patiently waits for repentance from sinners, there is also an expiry date for which repentance is no longer possible and God would have to act. Such acts of repentance from sinners and God repenting from doing good and evil to sinners depending upon their response to God’s dealing are found in many passages in the book of Jeremiah: **And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide; If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you. (Jeremiah 20:16; 26:3,13,19; 31:19; 42:10)**

The call to repent is continually given to the children of Israel through the prophet Ezekiel though some of them had already been carried away to Babylon: **Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not**

be your ruin. (Ezekiel 14:6 & 18:30) The Lord also spoke about repenting on His part depending on the action of the children of Israel. God's dealing with the children of Israel is consistent with Israel's behaviour: **I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 24:14)**

God's eagerness to bless His people and deliver them in time of trouble is expressly shown. Unfortunately, the rebellious children of Israel had really been a pain so much so that while God really wanted to bless them and help them but God was not justified in doing so: **And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. (Hosea 11:7&8)**

Eventually, judgment has to come upon these sinners. Repentance is even said to be hid from God's eyes: **The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up. (Hosea 13:12-16)**

It is sheer folly to continue to sin and then wait and ask God to grant true repentance. No such truth is ever taught in the Holy Bible. The exact opposite is taught in the Holy Bible where repentance is demanded from sinners before God who repent from judgment upon sinners: **And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent,**

and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God? (Joel 2:13&14) The decision to bless and restore sinners is God's prerogative and only when God is satisfied with sinners' repentance will He repent to restore them and bless them. So when sinners repent, God also will repent which is consistently taught in the Scriptures: **The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD. The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD. (Amos 7:3&6)** Unless one is a high-minded conceited scholar who demands how the words "repent" and "repentance" ought to be used, the Holy Bible has its own way of defining words. Such truths are not even hidden from the heathen who are ripe for God's wrath to be poured forth upon them.

And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. (Jonah 3:4-10) The barbaric sinners in Nineveh were clearly more advance in their understanding of God's nature than many self-conceited scholars and false teachers. When Jonah proclaimed God's judgment upon them, they repented at his preaching. Not only they repented, they also did not insist God show them mercy. They knew their repentance was actually quite worthless. They did not know whether God would withhold judgment upon them. God's repentance is purely at His discretion when He is satisfied with the sinners' repentance. They knew God would have mercy on whom He would have mercy! They would rather trust in God's mercies for they are new every morning. Imagine some deluded advisers at the palace advising the king to pray and ask God to grant them

“true repentance”, whatever that is supposed to mean, instead of repenting from their wickedness!

Jonah was obviously upset because he understood that God could and did repent of what He intended to do to the sinners in Nineveh: **And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. (Jonah 4:2)** Jonah was afraid God would repent of the evil He would do to the sinners in Nineveh for they were Israel’s enemies. That was the reason why he fled from the Lord and did not want to preach to them. He wanted God to destroy them!

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. (Zechariah 8:14&15) So the Old Testament shows God can repent or not repent on what He would or would not do to sinners and the children of Israel alike which also depends on fallen men’s response to His dealing with them. The biblical terms “repent” and “repentance” are not strictly used for sinners and sinners only. Repentance involves a change of mind and action. Repentance does not always mean repent from sins like the case of sinners but in God’s point of view, God can repent of certain action He would take on sinners whether to chastise and judge them or to restore and bless them.

The New Testament continues with the same concept of repentance requires from fallen men. When John the Baptist came onto the scene preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin, he demanded proof of repentance before he would baptize his converts: **John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Mark 1:4 & Matthew 3:2) 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 3:8&9)**

So when fruits meet for repentance are absent, water baptism is not administered. Repentance is not just mental accent and consent of one's conditions acknowledging the need to repent. It is an outward act of remorse and restitution before repentance is actually genuine like the case of the sinners in Nineveh. Absence of fruits meet for repentance from the sinners there would surely not avert God's judgment upon that city. John the Baptist's water baptism is mainly aimed at the children of Israel for he is the prophet prophesied to come to prepare the way for the Messiah to Israel. His preaching of the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin is to turn the children of Israel back to the Lord according to his own confession: **I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (Matthew 3:11&12)**

Israel though restored and back in the Bible land with the temple standing in Jerusalem was a far cry from her glorious days under the reign of her kings. The nation was actually out of favour with Jehovah God where four hundred years of silence greeted the nation after the last prophet penned the last book of the Old Testament ending with a warning to the children of Israel: **Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. (Malachi 4:4-6)**

Now that John the Baptist is on the scene, the offer to repent is given to the nation. The outward form of temple worship is more of a form than substance. The semblance of national life is one granted by their Roman masters ruling from Rome. The king on the throne is actually a puppet having to answer to his external powers that be rather than a son of David sitting on the throne in Jerusalem. In fact, Jerusalem is governed by a Roman governor who still allows the Jews religious freedom to keep the people in line, submitting to Rome. The religious institution has the blessing from Rome, which is evident for when Christ comes to the scene, the religious leaders fear the revolution of the people and their own demise according to their own confession: **If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. (John 11:48)** So repentance is offered to the nation via the ministry of John the Baptist preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin for the King is now on earth in Israel.

When John the Baptist has completed his mission preparing the way for the Messiah, Christ Himself picks up the program and offers repentance to Israel: **Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:14&15)**

Now the call to repent has come from the Saviour of the world. Men are expected to repent. Those who repent must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. They submit to John's baptism of repentance for the remission of sin. They believe John who pointed them to follow Christ when He shows up: **The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. (John 1:29-31)** The purpose of John's water baptism is to manifest Christ to Israel. Hence the call to repent as a nation is issued: **And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. (Mark 6:10-12)** The disciples went

to preach that men should repent not that they should wait and ask God to grant them true repentance. This shows how ridiculous it is to ask God to grant true repentance to sinners. So here is the unambiguous message that men should repent and not that God do the repenting for them by granting them true repentance.

The call to repent from Christ is unmistakable as well: **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32)** Those still clinging unto the false hope that God would grant them true repentance should think again. For the Lord confirms that repentance is possible: **Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. (Luke 10:13&11:32)** There is no alibi for those who claim that they cannot repent and God must grant them true repentance: **The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. (Matthew 12:41)** Repentance is possible and God expects sinners to repent.

The call to repent rings loud and clear again: **I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3&5)** Only those who wish to delude themselves would continue in sin while praying and waiting for God to grant them true repentance and save them from hell fire against their will. Repentance is not only possible but it brings joy to heaven according to the words of none other than the Creator of this world: **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. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke 15:7&10)** Do we believe the Saviour concerning repentance or do we believe some false teachers who teach that we should pray and wait for true repentance to come from God?

While the Lord expects sinners to repent, repentance from sinners must be genuine. No amount of outward form of sacrifices qualifies as repentance: **But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy,**

and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Matthew 9:13) The Pharisees had all the outward performances of religiosity but they did not repent at the preaching of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Pharisees mistook the Lord would accept their outward righteousness having no need to repent but they were rejected. They were beyond repentance for repentance was not in their vocabulary. They believed they were doing the will of God with all the outward observances and temple worship. To illustrate who is doing the will of God, the Lord gives this parable. **But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. (Matthew 21:28-32)**

The scribes and Pharisees are like the second son in this parable who claimed to be doing God's work verbally but taking no action at all. The publicans and harlots are like the first son who initially refused to do God's work and will but later repented and went to work for God. The Lord pointed out that those who repented believed John the Baptist, brought forth fruits meet for repentance but the Pharisees did not repent though they witnessed all of God's doing in their midst. They believed they were right with God and had no need for repentance. They believed God was more interested in their sacrifices, just like the rebellious king Saul in time past. But David had a better understanding that God was not really interested in sacrifices: **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 a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Psalms 51:16&17)** David realized that no amount of animal sacrifices would atone for his sins for sinning against Jehovah God. In his repentance, he called out to God to have mercy on him and not for God to grant him true repentance: **Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 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: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. (Psalms 51:16&17)

In David's repentance, there is acknowledgement of his sin and he asked for cleansing and restoration. He did not ask God to grant him true repentance for his repentance was truly from a broken spirit and a contrite heart. In contrast, Judas also repented to extent of confessing that he had sinned after betraying the Lord Jesus Christ but his repentance was found wanting: **Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:3-5)** His confession of having sinned was not confessed to God but to those wicked religious leaders. Hence, Judas' repentance was not the repentance God would accept. Judas was like many of those false penitents before him like Pharaoh and king Saul confessing to have sinned but still eventually perished in iniquity. So there is no value in confessing sins to any earthly priests or religious leaders. It must be like the confession of the prodigal son: **And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. (Luke 15:21)** The penitent must first acknowledge that he has sinned against God and then to those whom he has sinned against. This explains what repentance is and what repentance is not.

Even the rich man who ended up in hell fire believed in repentance by requesting Abraham to send Lazarus to preach to his family members not to join him in this place of torment: **And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. (Luke 16:30)** He wanted his family members to repent before it was too late. The concept of repentance does not change in the New Testament. However, it has an added dimension this time in that sinners are just not repenting so that God will deliver them from the enemies like the children of Israel in the Old Testament, but repentance will lead unto life, meaning everlasting life in Christ. Notwithstanding, to repent is to have a change of mind and a corresponding change of action where fruits meet for repentance are required concerning repentance that is genuine. Repentance can also be concerning an offence committed between brethren: **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) Forgiveness and restoration are conditioned upon repentance. The offending party does not ask the offended party to grant him true repentance. No such nonsensical joke is entertained and one wonders why such ridiculous falsehood is taught! Forgiveness is actually sought from the offended party instead of making a mockery of the whole process of repentance by asking true repentance from the offended party.

When Christ has finished His work of atonement for sin for sinners on the cross of Calvary, He commanded His disciples to preach this gospel to all nations: **And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46&47)** Hence the call to repent and believe the gospel is still the central truth in the New Testament. A sinner who believes in Christ will repent. Repentance and faith in Christ go together. Repentance cannot be absent in true salvation in Christ for repentance and remission of sins are inseparable. Where repentance is absent, remission of sins will be impossible.

So having received this commission from the resurrected Lord of glory, the apostles faithfully preached this gospel firstly to the nation of Israel: **The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. (Acts 5:30&31)**

This is the first time the Scripture is mentioned that God is giving repentance. But it must however be noted that this repentance is for Israel and not for the Church of the living God. Israel is out of favour with God and in need of repentance to be restored. Individual members of the Church of the firstborn are never told or taught to pray to God to grant them repentance, let alone true repentance. This Church is the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ and this Church is never out of favour before God. As such, repentance is offered to Israel to accept Christ as her Messiah and King but they rejected this offer. From here on, the Lord deals with the world at large to call out a people to be a different nation from the earthly nation of Israel: **But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an**

holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9&10)

Offer to obtain mercy is now given to individuals not necessarily belonging to the earthly nation of Israel. Repentance and remission of sin are now made available to the Gentiles as preached by the apostle Peter: **When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. (Acts 11:18)** This offer of repentance is first preached by John the Baptist to Israel as also understood by the apostle Paul: **Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. (Acts 13:23&24)** Paul explained that this repentance unto life has moved on from John's baptism of repentance to a person, which is the Lord Jesus Christ: **Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38&39)** So the granting of repentance unto life as declared by Peter is now made available through Christ as Paul insisted that all who believe on Him are justified which the Law of Moses could not.

Thus, repentance as a gift is now made available through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. No one needs to pray to God to grant him true repentance, unless he thinks that Christ and Christ alone is not sufficient to offer and secure him repentance through the work of the cross. So the apostle Paul continues to preach that men everywhere should repent as commanded by God: **Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (Acts 17:29-31)**

For those who are confused about this baptism of repentance for the remission of sin initiated by John the Baptist, Paul always makes it a point to explain the transitional nature of the foundation of repentance from man's part to the part fulfilled by the perfect Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ: **Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. (Acts 19:4)** Ever since the fulfillment of Bible prophecy of the Seed of the Woman who comes via Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and then through king David, repentance toward God is only made possible through faith in what Christ has done for the sinner which he himself could not accomplish no matter how he wishes to repent to the satisfaction of the thrice holy God: **Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:21)** The Jews are no longer the sole custodian of this truth and gift but repentance unto life is now also available to the Gentiles. So this gospel of Christ by which sinners are saved has been preached everywhere by the apostle Paul: **But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. (Acts 26:20)**

The nature of repentance is now measured against whether a man would believe in Christ as the Son of God, the Messiah of the world, who died for the sins of sinners and rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God waiting to return to set up His Kingdom on earth. When a sinner repents, he will turn to God and believe in Christ. He will do works meet for repentance and he will have a lifetime repenting as fruits meet for repentance. Anyone claiming to be a child of God who has no need to repent of sins in the flesh, his faith in Christ is strange fire. This is made very clear by the apostle John: **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10)** For a child of God, he will never say he has no sin. If he claims he has not sinned, he is in fact making God a liar and the word of God is not in him. As a child of God, he is to confess his sin and ask God to forgive him of his sins and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness. If he is sincere in doing this, this is his repentance and works meet for repentance. He cannot ask God to grant him true repentance for God is not going to grant him repentance by sending His

Son to die for him again. God is not going to do the repenting for him either. He must forsake his sin and repent by asking God to forgive him. Repentance must be accompanied by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. It is not passive work sitting idly by waiting for God to grant him true repentance.

When discussing the part where God deals with a sinner to lead him to repentance, Paul wrote this to the Christians in Rome: **Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Romans 2:4)** God knows the nature of sinners and their propensity to sin. But it is the goodness of God who patiently deals with sinners and leads them to repent by confronting them with the truth concerning their sinful conditions in need of repentance. The sinner will have to face Christ whether to believe him and accept Him as his personal Saviour when he has been awakened by the Holy Spirit concerning his true condition as a sinner deserving hell fire. This is conviction of sin on the part of the sinner. Conviction of sin and repentance are not the same thing. A sinner may be convicted of his sin, but repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ may not be his response like the case of Judas Iscariot. He may do all kind of works to save himself. He may make restitution and try to turn over to a new leaf. He may become a charitable person and do many wonderful works to benefit fellowmen. But this is not the kind of repentance that God is looking for as he has rejected Christ and despised Christ's sacrifice for his sins as something worthless that cannot save him from his present predicament or future state in the life to come. A classic case of such conviction of sin is shown in John 8 when the scribes and Pharisees try to set Christ up with the woman taken in adultery: **So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (John 8:7-9)** All these people were convicted but none was left to confess to Christ to ask for forgiveness. In other words, none of them repented of their sins.

So conviction of sin does not always end in salvation of the soul. Saved and lost men do have conviction of sin but their faith in how to have their sins remitted differs. As such, conviction of sin is not an accurate

indicator of the sinner whether he is saved for the object of his faith may not be the same. Since repentance unto life is granted to all through Christ, once a man receives this gift of repentance unto life, it is his forever. God will not repent as far as this gift is concerned: **For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (Romans 11:29)** The thrice holy God is not an unjust God who breaks promise. God will not change His mind when He has granted salvation to sinners by grace through faith in Christ. How then and why should a child of God pray to God to grant him true repentance? A child of God having been adopted into the family of God will have a lifetime of repenting to do to keep himself pure and to please God. It is not his repentance that saves him as though his repentance has any merits at all. It is the faith of Christ who has done it all for him that saves him because he has believed in Christ: **Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16)** This clearly shows how much is the value of a sinner's own repentance!

Notwithstanding, to repent is still a change of mind and a change in one's action. A sinning member from the Church in Corinth who took his father's wife was recommended by the apostle Paul to be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh in hopes of repentance from him (1 Corinthians 5). This member later repented of his sins and Paul wrote to the church the second time to explain his feeling on this matter and his further recommendation concerning this person: **For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. 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. (2 Corinthians 7:8-10)**

Paul acknowledged that his first letter concerning the matter to discipline this sinning Christian had made the church to feel sorry about the whole episode for failing to exercise church discipline and glory over the sinning member. Paul also confessed that he did not repent about writing what he wrote in his first letter to them though he repented for causing them to feel hurt. Here the word "repent" is used in the sense of "regret" where

Paul regretted that he had to make them feel sorry about the matter. However, it is not something regretful actually. Thus, he explained that such feeling of sorry over sin is something good for this is godly sorrow, which works repentance to salvation not to be repented of in the sense that there should be no regrets over such an experience. He contrasted the sorrow of the world that works death where Judas Iscariot is a classic case. Moreover, Paul rejoiced over their obedience on this matter. Nonetheless, not all are obedient for some had sinned and had not repented of their sins which Paul denounced in no uncertain terms: **Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed. (2 Corinthians 12:19-21)** So a Christian has to practise repentance for the rest of his life. This will not keep him saved but keep him in good state and fellowship with the Lord and other fellow Christians. Paul had never recommended the sinning members in Corinth to pray and wait for God to grant them true repentance. He expected them to repent; otherwise, he would use sharpness against them to get them in line with the expected behaviour as children of God.

Granting repentance for some has been taken out of the context in the sense that such prayers expect God to stop them from sinning, which is utterly unrealistic. Paul taught Timothy how to deal with those who were in errors: **And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (2 Timothy 2:24-26)** This instruction here must not be confused with God granting sinners repentance and stop them from ever sinning again. This is the servant of the Lord dealing with those who oppose themselves by instructing them in hopes that God will grant them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. This is God offering them a chance to repent and accept the truth so that they may recover themselves from the snarl of the devil. There is no evidence to suggest such people who oppose

themselves pray to God to grant them true repentance. It is the work of God's servants that brings conviction to them who are held captive by the devil.

The apostle Paul also talked about leaving the foundation of repentance from dead works: **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. (Hebrews 6:1&2)** Those who think that their repentance can save them and those who believe that praying to God to grant them true repentance do not understand the foundation of repentance in dead works. Repentance works both ways for sinners as well as for God. To repent is to have a change of mind and a corresponding change of action or intended action with regards to a situation. In the Old Testament, the children of Israel are told to repent to come back to God whenever they stray away from Jehovah God. Repentance will enable Jehovah God also to repent from inflicting judgment to chastise them so that they may remain as a viable nation living under the blessing from God. In the New Testament, repentance unto life is given through Christ but first preached by John the Baptist via the water baptism of repentance for the remission of sin. So the foundation of repentance has been laid and it is now securely held in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ to receive the gift of repentance unto life.

As such, for some, having received this truth and later turn away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. This is because repentance unto life is obtained by means of the work of the perfect Son of Man, the only begotten Son of God's sacrificial death on the cross of Calvary, shedding His Holy and precious blood to wash away the sins of sinners. To renew such people unto repentance of life again, it would require Christ to be crucified again and put Him to an open shame one more time according to **Hebrews 6:6: If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.** So for those who have this habit of praying to God to grant them true repentance, they have better check their hearts to see whether there are any pet sins they do not want to forsake. It surely cannot be the Holy Spirit teaching and leading a child of God to pray that way. It could be that such sinning child of God may end up like the case of Esau finding no place of repentance: **For ye know how that afterward, when he**

would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. (Hebrews 12:17) Making a mockery of sin and expecting God then to grant true repentance does not pay. Praying to God to grant true repentance simply becomes vain repetition.

Repentance is now freely available to all through Christ for what He has accomplished on the cross. Peter tells us God is very patient in waiting for sinners to come to repentance and God is not withholding this from anyone: **The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)** It is God's will that sinners come to repentance and God is in no way hindering anyone by withholding repentance from them. It cannot be any clearer that God is not willing that any should perish and as such, to ask God to grant repentance is a misnomer as though God is not willing to dispense repentance and the accompanying salvation to some. When sinners do not want to repent and come to repentance unto life, it is definitely not God's fault. As far as salvation of lost souls are concerned, no one is ever commanded in the New Testament to pray to God to grant them repentance, let alone true repentance. This salvation by grace through faith in Christ is there, readily available and the precious blood of Christ is ever efficacious to wash away the sins of sinners and save them unto the uttermost.

As for individual members of the Body of Christ, repentance is a daily affair. No disciples ever asked God to grant them true repentance. No one is ever taught to pray to God in such a manner. Does God expect His children to repent? Of course! In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ personally issued the call to repent to five different local churches for their sins and threatened to remove them.

To the church in Ephesus:

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)

To the church in Pergamos:

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:16)

To the church in Thyatira:

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. (Revelation 2:21&22)

To the church in Sardis:

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (Revelation 3:3)

To the church in Laodicea:

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. (Revelation 3:19)

The implications are very clear. God expects believers to repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance when they sin. This repentance is not the repentance that will save their souls. They are saved by grace through faith of the Son of God. This repentance is concerning the Christian's walk with the Lord. Chastisement will come for those Christians who refuse to repent of their sins and waywardness. So it is hopeless to pray to God to grant sinning Christians repentance, let alone true repentance. Christ gives the order to repent and it is Christians' responsibility to repent. Refusal to repent and turn around to ask God to grant true repentance is an insult of the highest order. God is certainly not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, so will he reap. When the Lord gives the command to repent, believers are certainly capable of repenting of their sins and unrighteousness. To believe otherwise is to reject the veracity of the Scriptures.

So how may a Christian repent? The apostle Paul also freely acknowledged he had this trouble having to deal with the old man in him, the flesh: **For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. (Romans 7:14-25)**

What Paul experienced is common to all Christian: **There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)** His desire to be delivered from bondage is evident to all. Yet, Paul had never asked God to grant him true repentance. He showed by example how to overcome the flesh and live a victorious Christian life: **Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)**

Moreover, Paul explained the nature of the flesh and how to overcome the nature of this old man: **Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let**

not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (Romans 6:6, 11-13) This was not just empty rhetoric devoid of substance for Paul was a practitioner of what he preached: **I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. (1 Corinthians 15:31)** So Paul often called on believers to put off the old man and put on the new man: **That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)** Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: (Colossians 3:9&10)

For a child of God to pray to God to grant him true repentance in hopes of not ever sinning again is a tragic manifestation of the lack of understanding of the Scriptures. If the apostle Paul could not eradicate the effects of the old man, what makes a Christian think he could by simply praying to God to grant him true repentance? In fact, he should try out the recommendations offered by Paul to die to self daily and put on the new man. He should ask God to help him in this godly endeavour instead of pushing the responsibility to God to grant him true repentance. The inability to have victory over some pet sin is not God having been defective in granting the believer true repentance or grace to overcome sin because the believer has been told: **For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14)** Having to repent from sin is normal and a daily exercise to keep a child of God right with God. Refusing to repent will harden one's heart against the Lord. No amount of praying to God to grant true repentance will solve the problem of hardheartedness: **For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king. (1 Samuel 15:23)** This stinging indictment against the rebellious king Saul will also ring loud and clear to a sinning child of God.

When God deals with fallen men and they refuse to repent, God sends judgment upon them to destroy them: **And the rest of the men which were**

not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. (Revelation 9:20&21; 16:9&11) Even when God judges these sinners, they still refuse to repent. Is it because God is withholding repentance from them? But we have been told that the Lord is not willing that any should perish but come to repentance. So it cannot be that God is responsible for these sinners who refuse to repent. It is unjust to accuse God of unrighteousness for refusing to grant them repentance and sinners must earnestly pray to God to grant them true repentance to avert a disaster. It is amazing to see believers being deceived to such an extent that God is somehow responsible to grant true repentance to sinners and Christians alike.

Perhaps we are living in these last days where faith in the words of the living God is really found wanting. Regarding the words associated with the word “repent” in the Old Testament, they have almost all been replaced with some other words that do not carry exactly the same meaning and effects for the verb “repent”. The NASB retains these words in Numbers 23:19, 1 Kings 8:47, Job 42:6 and Jeremiah 8:5 & 26:3 while the NIV keeps these words in 1 Kings 8:47, Job 42:6 and Jeremiah 31:19 from the forty-six verses discussed here. One glaring private interpretation from these people who produced these corrupted versions is that the word “repent” cannot and must not be applied to God. God is not supposed to repent but men. They have failed miserably in applying the biblical teaching of repentance and they reduce repentance to simply feeling sorry or a change of mind. They are hopelessly trying to salvage God’s reputation by disallowing the word “repent” to be used on the part of God thus destroying the nature of repentance where a corresponding turning is involved in the act of repenting from something. The Scriptures teach that to repent is not just a feeling of regrets or sorry as well as a change of mind on a matter or situation, for it must be accompanied by a change of course and sometimes even action where a response is involved.

Nonetheless, these corrupted modern versions left almost all the words associated with the word “repent” unchanged in the New Testament in some way suggesting that repentance is just a New Testament doctrine. Having distorted the teachings of repentance in the Old Testament, these corrupted versions replaced the word “repented” in the case of Judas Iscariot’s repentance for having betrayed innocent blood in Matthew 27:3. They do not believe Judas repented as taught in the Scriptures because of their unbelief. They do not understand that repentance does not always mean repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. So they injected their own private interpretation suggesting that Judas felt or was seized with remorse and thus, not only confusing Bible students on the true nature and meaning of biblical repentance as required by God, they have destroyed the purpose, substance and object of repentance. No wonder deluded Christians continue to feel remorse and not repent of their sins but pray to God to grant them true repentance!

Therefore, it is also not surprising that some believe repentance is the basis of their salvation because traitors like Judas did not repent. While it is true that repentance is involved in any genuine conversion and salvation of man’s soul, repentance alone is still filthy rags in the sight of God. The penitent has no right to force God to accept his repentance to merit forgiveness and even to obtain salvation. The offending party has to bring forth fruits meet for repentance trusting in the just and Holy God to deal with him in mercy according to His good pleasure whether to accept his repentance or to reject him altogether. The way God will only receive a sinner is when he allows Christ to take his place for his sins on the cross of Calvary. He must trust Christ and Christ alone and it is the faith of Christ that saves him and not his faith on his repentance. Having been saved by grace through faith, he will have a lifetime of repentance to do having been awakened to his need and true nature living in the body of this death. The repentance unto life through the gospel of Christ received by the sinner will enable him to see him as God sees him and repenting becomes part and parcel of his earthly pilgrimage till he is perfected in glory at the end of his earthly life.

Hence, it is perfectly normal for a child of God to ask God for forgiveness for sins in the flesh because of the quickening of the new man in him having been sealed unto the day of redemption by the Holy Spirit. However, just because of the imperfection living in this natural body and having a need to seek forgiveness regularly, to ask God to grant true

repentance is simply immature and ridiculous. What is this child of God trying to achieve? Is he trying to achieve sinless perfection in this life? This is simply impossible and outrageous. If the apostles claimed that they were not perfect and could not and did not achieve sinless perfection; who is going to attempt this insurmountable spiritual feat? If God can truly grant true repentance, so when this child of God having received it, will he ever pray to receive true repentance again? If he does, what happens to the true repentance he received early on? Did it turn out to be false repentance God gave him? Did he lose the true repentance he had received and as such he is asking for it again?

Undoubtedly, those who keep praying to God to ask for true repentance are spiritually sick. Why is there this constant need to ask for true repentance from God as though God is withholding it from him? Is it because of guilt for some pet sins the child of God refuses to repent or unwilling to repent? Is he trying to get God to force him to repent? Is he blaming God for his failure to repent from some sins and weakness of the flesh? Praying to God to grant true repentance is not only meaningless; it is ridiculous and worse than vain repetition. God is not trying to play trick on His children by giving them false repentance and see how they would respond. God is not trying to stretch His people to see how far they would go before they would truly repent. The propensity for Christians to sin is always there but to blame God for not granting true repentance is simply outrageous for James cautioned: **Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (James 1:13-15)**

This false teaching of asking God for true repentance is insidious and dangerous. It puts the child of God to sleep. When the child of God cannot overcome the flesh, the world and the devil, he simply does nothing and even continues to sin until such time God grants him true repentance. It affects others around him and causes others to think like him and live like him. His failure to overcome sin and worldliness is justified because God has not granted him true repentance. His waywardness becomes the norm and soon he becomes a castaway bringing others along with him. This false teaching is quite fashionable and respectable because it is clothed with high-sounding theological terms. This may be the reason why some people are so easily deceived into practicing this bad habit of praying to God to grant true

repentance as though there is humility and piety in such prayers. Upon closer examination from Scriptures, such unscriptural prayers and their accompanying numbing of the spiritual man to fight the flesh and overcome the world must be rejected outright. No spiritually discerning Christian would want to mock God by praying to God to grant him true repentance while continuing in sin in a way blaming God for his wretched state and his unwillingness to repent from sin.

The foundation of repentance for salvation starts with God offering sinners a chance to repent by giving them the gift of repentance unto life through Christ. Biblical repentance deals with the change of mind of the sinner having been confronted with guilt from sin where remorse and grief are experienced and the penitent will do works meet for repentance that is acceptable to God according to His holy words. Repentance on its own has no merits for such repentance may not be directed to God in confession of having sinned against God. A child of God will henceforth acquire the need to repent from time to time when the Lord teaches him and shows him the errors of his way through the perfect words of the living God. Any other notions of having faith in one's repentance to gain God's approval and acceptance or waiting for God to grant true repentance are just unscriptural teachings and they must be rejected. Otherwise, the practice of repentance is fraudulent and meaningless. May the goodness of the Lord lead all to Scriptural repentance!

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