

REPENTANCE: HIS GIFT, OUR CHOICE

I. The Feast of Purim

We have just celebrated the Feast of Purim. In the Jewish calendar Purim begins at sunset on the 13th day of the Jewish month of Adar. Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from the impending genocide during their exile in the Persian Kingdom which was ruled by King Xerxes (518-465 B.C.)

The book of Esther tells the story of how God delivered His people through a young Jewish queen, Esther. Esther was an orphan raised by her cousin, Mordecai. Esther was chosen to become Persia's new queen after King Xerxes banished his first wife, Queen Vashti.

The **prime minister of Persia** was a man named **Haman**. Haman hated Mordecai, because Mordecai would not bow down and worship him when Haman would walk by. Mordecai, as a devout Jew, followed the 10 Commandments, refusing to worship anyone other than Jehovah, the Lord God.

Haman was filled with a demonic rage and plotted to destroy the entire Jewish population. Haman, because of his influence with King Xerxes, he persuaded the king that disloyal, dangerous people in his kingdom needed to be annihilated, which by implication meant all Jews.

Mordecai heard of this evil plan and he appealed to Queen Esther to go before King Xerxes and plead for the lives of her people.

Esther 4: 13 & 14, (NKJV)Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?"

Esther and the Jews in her royal household, along with Mordecai and others fasted for three days.

Esther knew that if she went uninvited into the King's presence, and he did not hold out his golden scepter to welcome her, that she would be killed. God gave Esther a strategy to invite King Xerxes and Haman to 2 banquets, and during the second banquet, she appealed for her life and for her people.

King Xerxes executed Haman and his sons upon the very gallows that Haman had built to have Mordecai killed and appointed Mordecai as his new Prime Minister.

Because King Xerxes could not reverse his first decree, he granted Mordecai and Esther permission to write new letters in the king's name that allowed the Jews throughout Persia to bear arms and protect themselves and called for them to stand up against their enemies.

In Esther Chapter 9, the Feast of Purim was instituted to commemorate God's deliverance of the Jewish people and it is observed every year.

II. Throughout history, Satan has always tried to destroy the Jews God's Chosen People. Because it was to and through this people that God was going to use to express His "**Commandments, Values and Ways**" to all of the entire world.

Joseph: his brothers sold him into slavery- taken to Egypt- falsely accused and imprisoned. Yet **his divine destiny would rise** to save his people during the years of famine in Canaan (his homeland) and in Egypt.

Moses: escaped Pharaoh's death decree to kill all the Hebrew male babies in Egypt. His life was miraculously spared by Pharaoh's daughter, because **his divine destiny was to deliver** the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt.

Jesus: in the New Testament: right after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, King Herod sent his soldier to kill the baby boys in Bethlehem, but God had already warned Joseph, Jesus' earthly father to flee.

To Moses, **God gave a moral code, the 10 Commandments**, and continued to reveal Himself and His righteous principles throughout the canon of scripture.

III. The Book of Esther has a direct bearing on our times. The enemy is still trying to eradicate God's foundation of what is right and what is wrong, based on a plain reading of the Word of God

Right now, in **America**, Satan is still seeking to eradicate and destroy all moral foundations rooted in God's truth

God has articulated clearly that He is calling people to His standards of righteousness. We know that we do not measure up to God's standards. **We have all sinned and come short (missed the mark). Romans 3:23**

IV. Three Ways of Knowing: Romans Chapter 1

1. Knowing the Grace of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who bore our sins on the Cross and offers us salvation and eternal life through faith in Him.

2. Knowledge of the legal contract: the Word of God that is the foundation for truth and instruction

God had a contract with Adam and Eve in the garden- they knew that they had sinned.

3. Knowing in the heart- moral compass- conscience that God has placed in every man

Psalm 19: 1- 4 New International Version

The heavens declare the glory of God: the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth their speech, night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

V. Current Crisis: Rewriting of the moral code to be anything people want it to be

Truth has become a “flexible” narrative- you can tell any story and it is now your “truth” no matter how it is twisted.

Movie: The Professor and the Mad Man: rewriting of the meaning of words in the English language

Michael Jackson: I’m “bad” meaning hip and cool- flipping meanings

Satan originated this twisting of God’s words: Garden of Eden

Has God really said?

Genesis 3: 5-5, 1. Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

2. And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3. but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”

4. Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

VI. We Must Develop a Biblical Understanding of This World's System.

The Apostle Paul expresses this understanding and defines our present world.

Romans Chapter 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Paul is talking about the **world's evil system** that is subject to Satan.

Galatians 1: 3, 4

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins **to rescue us from the present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father.

This world's system has:

1. Its own wisdom and earthly rulers I Corinthians 2:6

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

2. Its own Standards: I Corinthians 2: 6.8

Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise.

3. Is Controlled by the God of This Age: II Corinthians 4:4

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Satan's strategy is to steal the abundant life that God wants to give us.

Jesus said: John 8:44

You belong to your father, the devil, who wants you to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

VII. We must look for God's intended meaning, not a deceitful twisted meaning to achieve a selfish purpose

If we are only receiving input from the media, liberal institutions, human philosophies and influences, then we cannot know or understand what God's desires are for our lives.

The values of scripture are being perverted.

God wants us to return to the basic understandings of His Word. Many churches have already drifted from the moorings of God's Word over the last 20-30 years.

People don't believe their sin is wrong and God's truth is spurned and mocked. There is no secure foundation and people are building their lives on shifting sand.

Importance of the Word of God:

The program CLJ is instituting to read the Bible through in this year so we can rediscover the truth and healing of God's Word is more valuable than can be explained.

Jesus said: "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free"
(John 8:32)

Satan convinces us of a vicious, seductive lie: “We can’t Change.”

This is a vicious lie opposed to the truth of transformation through Christ. This lie tells us that we just have to accept who we are and not to seek our new identity in Christ who has the power to change us from glory to glory.

VIII. The Apostle Paul understood and described our Human Dilemma. Romans 7: 15- 25. (The Passion Translation)

v. 15: I’m a mystery to myself, for I want to do what is right, but end up doing what my moral instincts condemn.

v. 16: And if my behavior is not in line with my desire, my conscience still confirms the excellence of the law. (**Seared conscience- narratives**)

v. 17: And now I realize that it is no longer my true self doing it, but the unwelcome intruder of sin in my humanity.

v. 18: For I know that nothing good lives within the flesh of my fallen humanity. The longings to do what is right are within me, but will-power is not enough to accomplish it.

v. 19: My lofty desires to do what is good are dashed when I do the things I want to avoid.

v. 20: So, if my behavior contradicts my desires to do good, I must conclude that it’s not my true identity doing it, but the unwelcome intruder of sin hindering me from being who I really am.

v. 21: I discover that even when I want to do good, evil is ready to sabotage me.

v. 22: Truly, deep within my true identity, I love to do what pleases God.

v. 23 But I discern another power operating in my humanity, **waging a war** against the moral principles of my conscience and bringing me into captivity as a prisoner to the “law” of sin— this unwelcome intruder in my humanity.

v. 24: What an agonizing situation I am in! So, who has the power to rescue this miserable man from the unwelcome intruder of sin and death?

v. 25: I give all my thanks to God, for His mighty power has finally provided a way out through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One! So, if left to myself, the flesh is aligned with the law of sin, but now my renewed mind is fixed on and submitted to God's righteous principles.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us **from the present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father.

IX. Only the power of Jesus Christ can break this Cycle of Death.

We don't have to accept the identity of our old corrupt nature... **from glory to glory He is changing me**... I am not perfect, not complete, **but I can change.** (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Our MINDS must be renewed to break these cycles.

We have to stop down and sit in the act of sin patterns. Ask God: How are my thoughts and action effecting You? Myself? Others?

Process... we don't see it all at once... it is hard to get our sin into perspective...

Sin seduces & destroys – cripples us from fulfilling the very thing we have been called to do - our “high calling,” our destiny in God.

Sin has consequences- addictions and addictive behaviors are destructive and they dig ruts in our minds.

Example: Porn

Self-condemnation does not help - monks beating themselves whipping their own backs in their attempts to stop themselves from thinking evil thoughts – this is just a distraction not a solution.

<https://watchmenpastors.org/archive-2018>

Look up the message by Josh McDowell on Pornography and Neurology

X. How Do We Change? We begin with Genuine Repentance

A. What is Repentance?

1. **Old Testament:** two Hebrew words help us understand repentance.

1. **nacham:** means to turn around or to change one's mind.
2. **sub:** used over 600 times in the Old Testament and is translated by such words as "turn," "return," "seek," "restore." This word is seen in commands like "to turn to the Lord with all your heart."

2. **New Testament: Greek word "Metanoia"**

Literally means "to change the mind." Repentance has to do with the way we think- **the changing of the mind.**

In every revival, People Return to God

B. Repentance is both God's Command and His Gift

1. **God's Command:** When the Apostle Paul preached in Athens, Greece, he found an altar with an inscription: to an unknown god. He used this opportunity to introduce the true and living God to the Athenians....

Acts 17: 29 – 31: New Living Translation

Since we are God's offspring, we shouldn't think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. God overlooked people's ignorance about these things in earlier times, **but now He commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to Him.** For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.

2. Repentance is essential to enter into and sustain a relationship with God.

Nothing can separate us from God's love. However, refusing to admit sin, and to change, damages our relationship with God, just like the refusal to admit when we're wrong, damages our human relationships.

Repentance is **NOT** just feeling sorry for ourselves or sorry that we "got caught." Repentance is **NOT** saying, "I'll try not to do it again."

II Corinthians 7:10:

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

True Repentance: admits that we have sinned against God and others. We must recognize the destructiveness of sin — to our own lives, to those around us, and to our friendship with God.

3. Peter's Sermon: Day of Pentecost (Acts Chapter 2: 36-41)

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up and shared the message of the Gospel to the people in Jerusalem: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "**Repent** and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call. With many other words Peter warned them and pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

Those who accepted Peter's message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

4. Peter knew what he was talking about. He knew the meaning of genuine repentance.

Peter was a disciple called by Jesus- "Follow Me." He had seen all the miracles Jesus did, including the healing of his own mother-in-law.

Yet, he had not experienced true conversion - denied that he even knew Jesus 3X and had to experience deep repentance (wept bitterly)

After Jesus' resurrection from the dead, He appeared to His disciples on a beach- cooked breakfast for them

Peter had gone back to his old lifestyle as a fisherman. Jesus gave Peter 3 fresh opportunities to affirm his love. Question: Peter, do you love Me?

5. Peter Understood that Repentance is a Gift from God to All People.

At Cornelius' house, Peter realized the Gospel was also for the Gentiles.

Acts 11:18: To the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.

6. Repentance must be gently encouraged In the right spirit

2 Timothy 2:25: Gently instruct those who oppose you in the hope that God may grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.

Only God can truly change hearts and give the gift of repentance. However, we can ask Him for a contrite heart for ourselves and others.

Promise of the Gospel: God will give you a New Heart.

Ezekiel 36:26–27

I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. **I will give you a new heart** and put **a new spirit** in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you **a heart of flesh**. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

7. Repentance and Faith Work Together

Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. Both are essential for salvation and both are gifts from God. God often sparks faith in our hearts, so He can empower us to repent.

Many people mistakenly believe they must repent before they can make a faith decision for Jesus. Repentance doesn't mean we "clean ourselves up" to come to Jesus.

8. The process of godly repentance will produce a change in the way we think and behave. Repentance is an ongoing process in our lives.

I John 1: 6-9

If we claim to have fellowship with God and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Acts 26:19, 20

I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should **repent and turn** to God and **prove their repentance by their deeds**.

9. Unwrapping the Gift of Repentance: What makes this Gift Valuable?

1. Confession and repentance acknowledges our sin before God and man which **helps us take responsibility for our sin**.
2. Confession and repentance humbles our pride and **brings our sin out of hiding** and into the light.
3. Confession and repentance is asking for and **relying on God's strength to help us change**.
4. Confession and genuine repentance **brings healing to our brokenness**.
5. Confession and repentance **sustains our loving relationship with God**.