

“EXCEPT YOU REPENT...” (1)

By Keith Greer

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Simply put, repentance is a change, or turn around, from one thing to another. Since God does not want any of us to perish, He has given us a means to escape the penalties of sin through repentance. He will forgive our sins, but He requires repentance from sin or evil on our part.

Nineveh was a city that had become very wicked, and God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and "cry against it" because of their wickedness. (Jonah 1:2) When Jonah finally went to Nineveh, he spoke to the people of God's impending wrath, and what did they do? They believed the message of Jonah, humbled themselves in sackcloth and ashes, and turned towards God. (Jonah 3:2-10)

Jesus told the Pharisees in Matthew 12:41 that "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here." The godly sorrow that the people of Nineveh demonstrated for their sinful life and their change of will was exhibited in their change of conduct. Henceforth, **REPENTANCE.**

When the children of Israel were continually disobedient to God's commandments, the prophets all had one message- **REPENT!**

"If you will return, O Israel," says the LORD, "Return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, Then you shall not be moved." (Jeremiah 4:1)

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place." (Jeremiah 7:3)

"Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:6-7)

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.'" (Ezekiel 14:6)

Even though they were continuously warned, the message to the children of Israel was always the same. God would forgive them if they would put away their idols ... if they would change their ways ... if they would forsake the wicked path ... if they would repent and return to the Lord.

The people of old had to fully comply with God's commandments in order to receive the blessings that He had promised. Thousands of years have passed. Has God's message changed today?

Paul told the Athenians that "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. "(Acts 17:30-31)

Jesus and the apostles had just as much to say to us about repentance as the prophets did to the children of Israel.

In Luke 13:3-5 Jesus said "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Repentance therefore is necessary if one wants to avoid perishing! (cont).***