

Come to Understanding

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24

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Repenting from Our Righteousness

Job had a problem. Even though he was a just and upright man, Yahweh allowed Satan to afflict him terribly. First, he lost everything he had, including his children. Then he was covered with “grievous boils:”

7 So went Satan forth from the presence of Yahweh, and smote Job with grievous boils from the sole of his foot to his crown.

8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself there-with; and he sat down among the ashes. -Job 2

Job’s friends concluded that his problems had come upon him because of his secret sins. One of Job’s friends asked him:

5 *Is* not your wickedness great? and your iniquities infinite? -Job 22

Responding to the accusations of unrighteousness that his friends had made against him, Job insisted that he would maintain his righteousness, no matter what afflictions he may need to endure:

3 All the while my breath *is* in me, and the spirit of God *is* in my nostrils;

4 My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.

5 God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove my integrity from me.

6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach *me* so long as I live. -Job 27

Despite Job’s circumstances, he was secure in his righteousness.

Finally, a young man named Elihu (meaning “he is my God”) stepped forward to speak. He asked Job a very pointed and ominous question:

2 Think you this to be right, *that* you said, My righteousness *is* more than God’s? -Job 35

Responding to Job’s assertion of his own righteousness, Yahweh asked Job:

8 Will you also annul my judgment? will you condemn me, that you may be righteous? -Job 40

Job finally repented of his belief in his own righteousness. He told Yahweh:

1 Then Job answered Yahweh, and said,
2 I know that you can do every *thing*, and *that* no thought can be withheld from you.

3 Who *is* he that hides counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech you, and I will speak: I will demand of you, and declare you unto me.

5 I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees you.

6 Therefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes. -Job 42

Job was only able to truly repent after he recognized that the righteousness of Yahweh was greater than his own. After Job’s repentance, Yahweh finally restored to him double that which he had lost.

Like Job, many of us may also be convinced of our own righteousness. We may believe that we are righteous because of our family heritage, title, position, good works, obedience to rules, organizational membership, meeting attendance, or even something that we said or did many years ago? If so then we may have inadvertently placed in our paths one of the greatest barriers to repentance, which is trusting in our own righteousness.

Paul wrote to the Romans concerning Israel:

1 Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.

4 For the Messiah *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. -Romans 10

Yahweh chose Israel to be His people (see Psalms 135:4 and Isaiah 44:1). After He brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt, He even gave them spiritual food and also spiritual drink, which was a type of the Messiah. Nevertheless, because of their disobedience, He overthrew them in the wilderness, before they were able to enter into the promised land. Paul explained this to the Corinthians:

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8

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- 1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;
- 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
- 3 And did all eat the same spiritual food;
- 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was the Messiah.
- 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. -1 Corinthians 10

Then Paul cautioned the Corinthians concerning the kind of sins into which Israel fell that caused them to lose the opportunity to enter into the promised land. He said that these were examples, which were written for believers, “for our admonition:”

- 11 Now all these things happened to them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world have come.
- 12 Therefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. -1 Corinthians 10

If we think we stand securely in our own righteousness, Paul tells us to “take heed” so that we do not also “fall.”

As Yahshua (Jesus) was teaching His disciples how to pray, He told them to ask for forgiveness, just as they forgive others:

- 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. -Matthew 6

How do we forgive others for their trespasses against us? As Yahshua explains, forgiveness follows repentance. He says that as many times as a brother repents of his trespasses against us, we are to forgive him for those trespasses:

- 3 Take heed to yourselves: If your brother trespasses against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.
- 4 And if he trespasses against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turns again to you, saying, I repent; you shall forgive him. -Luke 17

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Therefore, every time our brother repents, we should forgive him. Yahshua explained to Peter:

- 21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?
 - 22 Yahshua said to him, I say not to you, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. -Matthew 18
- If we, therefore, are asking God to forgive us in the way that we forgive others, then we also must repent of our sins to Him.

Repentance brings life:

- 26 When a righteous *man* turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and dies in them; for his iniquity that he has done shall he die.
- 27 Again, when the wicked *man* turns away from his wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.
- 28 Because he considers, and turns away from all his transgressions that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. -Ezekiel 18

We are deceived when we think we have no sin. This deception leads us away from the path to humble repentance. We are thereby unable to ask God to forgive us and to cleanse us from our unrighteousness:

- 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. -1 John 1

By admitting that we are sinners with a humble heart of repentance, we are able to receive the forgiveness that is offered to us through faith. As we believe that the blood of Yahshua the Messiah cleanses us from sin, God replaces our feigned righteousness with His true righteousness:

- 22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Yahshua the Messiah to all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:
- 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in the Messiah Yahshua: -Romans 3

Through repentance of past sins and faith that they are cleansed by the power of the blood of Yahshua the Messiah, God justifies us through His righteousness:

- 25 Whom God has set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Yahshua. -Romans 3

Each of us may want to ask: “Is my righteousness more than God’s?”