

Come to Understanding

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

June 1, 2012

Volume 11 Number 11

If You Will Return

During a time when Judah was on a course that was leading to their destruction, Yahweh offered a conditional promise to Israel:

- 1 If you will return, O Israel, says Yahweh, return unto me: and if you will put away your abominations out of my sight, then shall you not remove.
- 2 And you shall swear, Yahweh lives, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory. -Jeremiah 4

Yahweh said, in effect, “If you will return unto me, then I will not remove you from your land.” In other words, “I will not destroy you.”

The Hebrew word that is translated as “return” is שׁוּב (shuwb). It is also translated as “repent.” Yahweh told the house of Israel to repent from “all your transgressions” so that “iniquity (sin) shall not be your ruin.”

- 30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord Yahweh. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. -Ezekiel 18

Neither Israel nor Judah accepted the conditional promise of Yahweh. Unrepentant for their sinful rebellion against Him, both were destroyed (see 2 Kings 17:6; 25:9).

Conditional promises are often presented as an “if, then” statement, such as “If you do this, then I will do that.” Yahweh makes such promises to His people throughout the Scriptures. If we reject Him, then He promises judgment:

- 15 But if you will not obey the voice of Yahweh, but rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, then shall the hand of Yahweh be against you, as *it was* against your fathers. -1 Samuel 12
- 20 If you forsake Yahweh, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he has done you good. -Joshua 24

Those that believe in Him are counted as righteous, as it was with Abraham:

- 6 And he believed in Yahweh; and he counted it to him for righteousness. -Genesis 15

Therefore, when Yahweh offered to spare Sodom on behalf of the righteous, He was offering His mercy for those that believed in Him:

- 26 And Yahweh said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. -Genesis 18

Yahweh also says that, IF His people, the ones that call themselves by His name, will return from their unbelief and humble themselves to repent of their sins, THEN He will forgive their sins and heal their land:

- 14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. -2 Chronicles 7

There is often confusion between God’s unconditional love and His conditional promises. There is no condition placed on His love. As Paul explains, there is nothing that can separate us from it:

- 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
- 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in the Messiah Yahshua our Lord. -Romans 8

Because of His great unconditional love for us, He offers His conditional promise. IF we believe in Him through the Son (Yahshua), THEN we shall have everlasting life:

- 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
- 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. -John 3

He does not condemn those that do not believe in Him because they are already condemned. IF, however, they believe in Him, THEN Yahweh promises to save them from their present state of condemnation:

- 18 He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. -John 3

This conditional promise of salvation is often made clear through the context of the Scriptures, even where the words “if” and “then” are not specifically written. For example, Yahshua says, in effect, that IF we do not believe in Him, THEN we shall die in our sins:

**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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24 I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am *he*, you shall die in your sins. -John 8

Likewise, on the day of Pentecost following the ascension of Yahshua into heaven, Peter listed two conditions for receiving the promised “gift of the Holy Ghost:”

38 Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. -Acts 2

The first condition was to “repent.” This was also the first recorded word that Yahshua spoke as He began His earthly ministry:

17 From that time Yahshua began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. -Matthew 4

His warnings about the need for repentance were strong:

3 I tell you, No: but, unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish. -Luke 13

The Greek word, μετανοεω (metanoeo), which is translated as “repent,” literally means “to change one’s mind.” This is not a superficial mind changing, as many may think in the modern context of preferences, as in choosing ice cream flavors. Instead, it more likely means having our minds transformed from being ones that are led by the flesh to ones that are led by the Spirit of God. Paul calls upon us to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds:”

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. -Romans 12

That renewing is in the spirit of our mind, as we put on “the new man,” being spiritually created unto “righteousness and true holiness:”

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
24 And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. -Ephesians 4

True repentance is the response to the working of the Spirit of God through a sorrowful and humbled heart that changes our carnal mind into a spiritual mind:

6 For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. -Romans 8

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The second condition for receiving the promised “gift of the Holy Ghost” was to be baptized “in the name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins” (see Acts 2:38). At first glance, it appears that Peter said that the physical act of baptism remits sins. However, as Philip explained to the Ethiopian eunuch, there was a condition for him to be baptized in water. He must first believe with all of his heart that Yahshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) is the Son of God:

37 And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Yahshua the Messiah is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. -Acts 8

Therefore, the act of baptism is an outward demonstration of our faith that Yahshua died for our sins. If we die with Him as we are “baptized into his death,” then we are raised again by the power of His Spirit to “walk in newness of life:”

3 Know you not, that as many of us as were baptized into Yahshua the Messiah were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as the Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. -Romans 6

Having repented of our sins and died to them through faith in the power of the name of Yahshua, we are born again into the Spirit of God and can enter into His spiritual kingdom:

5 Yahshua answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a man is born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. -John 3

If we are born of the Spirit of God, then we must also be led by His Spirit to be called “the sons of God:”

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. -Romans 8

As “the sons of God,” it is tempting for us to get comfortable in our position and become lazy in resisting sin:

4 You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. -Hebrews 12

However, because God loves us as sons, He also disciplines (chastens) us when we neglect being led by His Spirit and, instead, walk after the flesh as we stray into sin:

6 For whom the Lord *Yahweh* loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? -Hebrews 12

His chastening helps to return us to share in His holiness:

10 For they truly for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. -Hebrews 12

If we return to Him to be led by His Spirit, then we are under no condemnation:

1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in the Messiah Yahshua, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. -Romans 8