

PORTRAITS OF REPENTANCE

Stephen rebuked the Jews as being **“stiff-necked”** and as being those who **“always resist the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 7:51). The opposite of resistance is submission which is indicative of true repentance which was what John the Baptist called the people to do (cf. Mk. 1:4). Paul says the Jews in their ignorance **“have not submitted to the righteousness of God”** (Rom. 10:3) and quotes God as saying to Israel, **“All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”** (Rom. 10:21). The problem was they lacked repentance which was reflected in their contrary ways.

In 2 Timothy 3:8 Paul says men of corrupt minds **“resist the truth”**. To stop resisting or opposing the truth and start embracing the truth is to surrender rebellion in exchange for saving faith. In Romans 2:5 Paul speaks of people in their **“stubbornness and unrepentant heart”**. The opposite of a stubborn heart is a yielded heart.

Christ in parabolic form described the unrepentant as saying, **“We will not have this man to reign over us”** (Lk. 19:14 cf. Lk. 19:27). In Matthew 18:3 Jesus said, **“unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”** In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector Jesus in Luke 18:13 portrayed repentance in the tax collector who **“would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat upon his breast saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’”** Repentance involves being humbled before God.

The High and Lofty One (God) dwells with **“him who has a contrite and humble spirit”** (Isa. 57:15). The midwives **“feared God”** and therefore did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them (Exodus 1:17).

In contrast Pharaoh did not fear God (Exodus 9:30). The Bible often describes a saving faith response as one of fearing God. Sometimes it uses the word “fear” and sometimes the word “faith” because the one is reflective of the other. A proper fear of (reverence for) God is descriptive of the nature of a true saving faith.

Job was described as a man who **“feared God and shunned evil”** (Job 1:1). Psalm 85:9 says that God’s **“salvation is near to those who fear Him”**. Psalm 103:13 says that **“the LORD pities those who fear Him”**. Proverbs 1:7 says, **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge”** – which in essence is the knowledge of the truth necessary to be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4-6; Heb. 10:26-27). Ecclesiastes 12:13 says the

conclusion of the whole matter is this: “***Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.***” Jonah described himself as “***a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven***” (Jon. 1:9). God says He is going to bring judgment on the wicked, “***Because they do not fear Me***” (Mal. 3:5). In Malachi 3:16 it says a special book of remembrance was written for those who “***fear the LORD***”. The promise of healing prosperity is ultimately promised to those who fear God’s name in Malachi 4:2.

In introducing the Gentiles to the gospel Peter described a saving faith response in this way: “***But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.***” (Acts 10:35) Paul climaxed his description of depraved rebellion by saying, “***There is no fear of God before their eyes***” (Rom. 3:18). Revelation 11:18 makes a contrast between the unsaved dead who are to be judged and that of the saints who are described as those “***who fear Your name***”.

NOTE: To fear God is to reverence Him for Who He is. It is a heart attitude involved in a saving faith response. The Bible is clear that justification is by faith alone, but it is equally clear that it must be a right kind of faith which involves a reverence (fear) for God. This is involved in a change of mind (repentance) kind of faith. Repentance involves a change of mind from a lack of reverence to now revering God.

Psalm 2:11–12 (NKJV)

11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Acts 10:34–35 (NKJV)

34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.