

## REPENTANCE IS GOD-ORIENTED

The book of Joel is **CENTRAL** in studying the topic of repentance. The reason is because the N.T. repeatedly ties the nature of saving faith back to Joel 2 which says whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13).

This emphasis of calling on the name of the LORD builds on the spirit of repentance called for earlier in Joel 2 where the LORD says to the people: "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, with mourning." (Joel 2:12). And then this application is made: "So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm." (Joel 2:13). Thus, the concept of repentance is closely linked in Joel 2 to the idea of calling upon the name of the LORD. And then the New Testament builds on this!

Interestingly enough the ONE sin specifically mentioned in the book of Joel is "drunkenness" (cf. 1:5). We might think it would be idolatry, murder, immorality, or some other "gross" sin but in fact these things are not mentioned.

Apparently "drunkenness" represents those who are self-indulgent and oblivious to spiritual realities and the importance of focusing on God. It represents pleasure-seeking and self-gratification with little or no thought for God. It is GREAT SIN just to neglect God and go about living for self-gratification. The Great Commandment is to Love God with all your heart (cf. Matt. 22:36-40) so it follows that it is GREAT sin to neglect God.

### **Luke 17:26–30 (NKJV)**

**26** And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

**27** They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

**28** Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;

**29** but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

**30** Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

Note the great sin in Luke 17 is having "NO THOUGHT FOR GOD" as it was in Joel's day. The activities themselves are not necessarily bad but being so wrapped up in the self-life is reflective of a sinful heart and it calls

for repentance. This is what Joel calls for in Joel 2:12-17. In fact, in Joel 2:16 we see that even the newlyweds were to put the “honeymoon” on hold and assemble for the purpose of getting right with God (cf. 2:15-17). In Joel 2 God is demanding that IMMEDIATELY the people REPENT and make Him THEIR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY!

Repentance is a change of mind that involves a reorientation of your thinking in regard to God. Where previously God was not the priority - now He is, where previously there was self-orientation - now there is God-orientation. REPENTANCE IS GOD-ORIENTED. This is true in both the OT and the NT.

In Acts 20:21 Paul emphasized that his message consistently was “**repentance toward God**”. In Acts 26:20 he said his message included that people “**repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.**” In 2 Cor. 7:9-11 Paul contrasted a “**godly sorrow**” which produces repentance with a “**worldly sorrow**” which is self-oriented.

In Revelation 2:4-5 Jesus tells the believers at Ephesus that something very serious has happened – namely, they have “**left their first love**”. They are still going through all the motions, but their heart is not “God-oriented” as it should be. They are called upon to REPENT.

Repentance is a change of mind/attitude in reference to God. Of course, if a person’s thinking is reoriented in reference to God, it will also be reoriented in relation to sin. This is a package! Repentance is involved in SAVING FAITH and also in the ongoing process of SANCTIFICATION. It involves a fundamental “change of mind” with regard to God!

“I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.” - **A.W. Tozer**—Knowledge of the Holy, p. 10.