

## Hope for Living Begins Only with Repentance

This column is entitled “Hope for Living.” In it ministers emphasize fundamental principles for living a joyful life. That is why this article concerns repentance. Hope for living begins only with repentance (Luke 15:11-24). You see, our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever (1 Corinthians 10:31; Psalm 73:24-28). But we satisfy neither purpose when we rebel against His authority and offend His holy nature. Rather, we live in antithesis to the universe and antagonism to God. Therefore, we incur both natural miseries and Divine wrath now and forever. The Scriptures soberly inform us that those who have an “impenitent heart” are “treasuring up wrath” for themselves (Romans 2:5) and that “destruction and misery” are in the ways of the unrighteous (Romans 3:16). “But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live” (Ezekiel 33:19).

The very first man on earth, who was the only man immediately created by God, discovered the misery of sin, even in a perfect environment, when he disregarded a clear rule of God (Genesis 3:9-24). Even the great and godly king David, who God characterized as “a man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22), experienced sin’s misery when he violated two of the Ten Commandments (2 Samuel 11:1-12:23). Even reasonable people who are not necessarily Bible-believers recognize this fact. Psychologist William James noted that “a man may not count sin, but it is being counted just the same. Down among his nerve cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering it, storing it up to be used against him.” Jesus also warned us all about sin’s misery: “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). The Greek word that is translated as “perish,” *apollumi*, is the word Jesus also used in reference to hell. For example, He encouraged us, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). The word “destroy” is the word *apollumi*, the same word translated as “perish.” This is the fate for all of us unless we turn from our sins purposing and endeavoring to obey God by honoring His laws. Then we shall surely live (Ezekiel 18:21).

However, most troubling and dangerous is the fact that we are strongly preferential against turning from our sin to obey God. Revelation 9:18-21 informs us of this shocking fact. In spite of massive and destructive plagues that will kill a third of mankind some future day, the survivors refuse to repent from those sins that demand them: witchcraft, materialism, violence, sexual immorality, and theft. Jesus warned of this strong preference against repentance. He said that many will call him “Lord, Lord,” but He will say to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matthew 7:21-23). There was something supremely important missing from their profession. That something was repentance. They never turned from their sin to live under God’s authority as evidenced by their failure to practice His laws. In the end they were lost. Do not be perilously assured of your safety if you live sinfully. But be assured that if you repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be liberated from condemnation and misery and you will live now and forever.

When we repent we have our sins blotted out and enjoy times of refreshing (Acts 3:19). When we repent we enjoy a close intimacy with the holy God –2 Corinthians 6:17-18. Concurrently, when we repent we are liberated from the source of miseries and ruin - Ezekiel 18:30. There are “many sorrows to the wicked,” but those who repent will “be glad in the Lord and rejoice” (Psalm 32:10-11). “He who despises the word will be destroyed, but he who fears the commandment will be rewarded” (Proverbs 13:13). “If you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13). So, turn to the Lord to obey Him and the Lord will “rejoice over you for good” (Deuteronomy 30:2, 9).

---