

Lifebyte 58

Will You Be Among Those Our Lord Chastises? (Part 1)

It's Time For Followers of Jesus To Live Repentantly

*"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves,
and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways,
then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land"*

(2 Chronicles 7:14)



*For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?
Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)*



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*“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out,
that times of refreshing may come from the Lord” (Acts 3:19)*

**When you’re *living in repentance*,
you’re heeding the indwelling Spirit
and maintaining an ongoing, viable
love relationship (fellowship)
with our Lord Jesus
and our heavenly Father.
Unconfessed sin severs all of this.**

Introduction

Sue and I were away for a few weeks recently. Even before we left I knew in my spirit that something new was going to be demanded of us on our return home. Therefore I spent a good deal of focused time seeking our Lord about what He would have us next address on behalf of His people.

My heart has been heavy concerning this nation’s sad state of Christianity as well as about the suffering the economy’s downturn has brought. I’ve also recognized that the outcome of the forthcoming elections would *change nothing* in people’s motives and purpose. I needed wisdom from our Lord to understand *His* perspective of these events, and guidance for what He would have Sue and me do as His servants.

Early one morning my spirit resonated with this message from my Lord Jesus:

“Help My people to live repentantly. If they have ANY unconfessed sin, then they have NO fellowship with Me or My Father. Repentance is the glue that binds the heart of those who call themselves “Christian” to Me and My Father. If they choose to live without repenting, they have no part of Us. Show them the *deceit* of living with unconfessed sin yet claiming to be in Me.”

Intertwined within these words was the deep pain of a Father Who wants so

much to share loving intimacy with each of us. Yet so many who identify themselves as “Christian” live day in and day out with unconfessed sin, oblivious of the rupture they’ve brought about in their fellowship with God.

He grieves for them, longing for them to repent so that they may enjoy intimate companionship with Him.

But even worse is the tragic reality that those who habitually ignore their tolerated sins and refuse to return to Him in humble repentance will stray from their faith as did those about whom Paul warned Timothy.

In the coming days of chastisement that are about to fall upon this nation, those who refuse to repent will increasingly give way to worldly values and goals that reap lacerating consequences.

*But those who **desire to be rich** [worldly goals/values] fall into temptation and a snare, and into many **foolish and harmful lusts** [covetous cravings] which drown men in destruction and perdition [lead to their ruin]. For the **love of money** [the pursuit they think will empower and satisfy] is a **root** [a starting point that feeds other ungodly desires] of all kinds of evil, for which some have **strayed from the faith** [disowned the Lordship of Jesus] in their greediness, and **pierced themselves through** [terrible self-inflicted pain] with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:9-10).*

Repentance makes fellowship possible.



Unrepentance makes fellowship impossible.



**“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out,
that times of refreshing may come from the Lord” (Acts 3:19)**

What is our Lord’s antidote to the tempting trap of self-fulfillment and gratification that’s apart from Him and His ways? Purpose beforehand in your spirit to stay repentant and walk in obedient trust through His Spirit and His Word! As with the pattern that permeates all of Scripture, *depart from evil* and wholeheartedly seek to *apply His good* to your life. This calls for intentional pursuit on your part, recognizing a spiritual battle that’s arrayed against you:

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you testified so well to your faith before many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:11,12).

Elections change nothing. This nation doesn’t have an *economic* problem — we have a *spiritual* one! And keep in mind that this current distress hasn’t been initiated by unbelievers; it’s been precipitated by those who call themselves “Christian” but who *live in compromise with the world*. Sinful compromise results in prayerlessness or ineffectual prayer — few standing in the gap before our Father’s Throne.

The Great Depression of the 1930s (too far back for most of us to have experienced!) was a lengthy season of chastisement on this nation. The greed and immorality of what has come to be called “The Roaring Twenties” found investments plummeting and savings evaporating. That which man had relied on proved to be the leaky lifeboat they’d substituted for a holy life set apart in Lord Jesus.

Note that the country had faced prior “depressions” during which the President

himself called for prayer and fasting, bringing the nation to repentance. This, however, was not the case in the 1930s. Then, as now, the government became ‘god’ to the people, many Christians in that number. Surely the “world’s most powerful nation” could find a way to bring back the prosperity and stability to which so many had become accustomed as their right...

Reliance on man’s ways became cemented. Rather than a national call to repentance, social programs were implemented to relieve suffering — programs such as Social Security that have now spun out of control to encompass far more people than were initially intended. And grievously, with an ever-decreasing percentage of workers to fund this system, our future generations will inherit trillions of dollars of financial debt that they can never repay.

As Christian pollster George Barna has reported, there is *no moral difference* between Christians and unbelievers in this nation. In the realm of personal finance, the love of money ultimately produces *fear of loss* in the hearts of those who are beset by its idolatrous influence.

The Bible is replete with God’s use of *signs* to point out that something’s about to happen, along with warnings to heed these signs and respond accordingly. A sign that the days of chastisement are coming is the increased fear in the hearts of so many, Christian or not. This pandemic *fear* is the kindling for the fires of race riots which will ultimately ignite the cities across the nation.

When those dark days come, you can expect a dictator to arise in the mold of Adolf Hitler. After the 9/11 attacks, fear caused many self-preservationist Americans to willingly forfeit certain free-

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doms just so the government would protect them. They were willing to do anything to ensure that their personal status-quo would continue! To accomplish this quest for preservation of the “way things are”, the President set aside key parts of our Constitution. For example, people were imprisoned without any charges filed against them.

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”.

George Santayana

There’s a reason that God so often reminded the Hebrew people to recall their past: certain life lessons will be forgotten unless they are repeatedly rehearsed to each generation. Fear of economic collapse caused the Germans to forfeit their freedoms in the 1920s. This set the stage for Hitler’s stratospheric rise to power in the 1930s, a pattern followed by every dictator who surfaces. *Use people’s fears as a stepping stone for personal power*—and become Satan’s emissary to oppress the people.

[You may not realize an important fact of history: democracies generally don’t last more than 200 to 300 years. Most collapse internally and become dictatorships — perhaps initially benign but eventually morally cancerous. How does this evolution most often take place? Out of wholehearted, frantic pursuit of *self*. The so-called “freedom” which democracies provide allow people to unabashedly pursue their sin nature’s focus on self-fulfillment, self-gratification, self-preservation.

God’s appraisal of human nature hasn’t changed. Perhaps that’s why so many western Christians are reluctant to learn from the Older Testament about His unchanging character as well as mankind’s unchanging propensity to sin: *“The LORD saw how*

great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (Genesis 6:5).

This nation is in the final stage of societal decay, the Atomistic Stage. Old and young have given way to pursuing what makes them happy, with no regard to whether it is right or wrong *in God’s sight*.]

(For more on the impact of the Atomistic Stage in a society, see **Lifebyte 30. Your Home: Our Father’s Primary Place For Combating Your Sin Nature.**)

The future dictator who will rule this nation will advocate such evil that the United States may well embody the label spoken of in Revelation, chapters 17 and 18:

**MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND
OF THE ABOMINATIONS
OF THE EARTH.**

You may also want to prayerfully ponder Isaiah 1:1-23. This passage clearly depicts how our Lord responds to a nation that is so habitually bent on doing evil.

We personally don’t know where our Lord’s command, **“Help my people to live repentantly”**, will lead. But we are confident of this: *We sense a strong presence of the Spirit of Jesus guiding us according to the truth of His Word. Some of you who are reading these Lifebytes want with all your hearts to please our Lord — and your heart is what He’s looking at and longing for.*

- **Take a close look at yourself. When you think of God and of the government of this nation, in which is your trust really the greatest? How do your life choices substantiate your response?**

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- **How do you see God’s hand in the events going on this nation? Is He sitting idly by, or is He causing events to bring us to repentance? Is dependence on the government getting in the way of His desire that we repent?**

“Unless you find out the world is evil, you will fall in love with this world.

There is no alternative.”

Michael Wurmbrand,
son of the founder of Voice of the Martyrs

“Evil”. What does this word connote to you? Do you see yourself as evil? Prior to your becoming our Father’s adopted child through your response to His gracious call in Jesus, you were a *slave to evil* — sin worked within you all manner of evil desire (Romans 7:8).

Evil is synonymous with *wicked*. Unless a deep love for your Lord Jesus abides in your heart compelling you to be free of sin’s influence in your life, you’ll never fully confront the evil motives that rule your soul (your mind, will and emotions). Please, be sure that your sin nature-controlled soul isn’t ruling you when you show up at the Judgment Throne. Our Lord has given you abundant opportunity to be free in Him!

An overriding heresy of our age is that people are basically good. According to pervasive humanism, *society* has made people do evil. Perpetrators of wickedness are considered victims themselves, and are therefore not responsible for their actions. Tragically, western Christianity at large has bought into this lie. How do we know this? Because the emphasis on repentance, that is, the call to *turn away from* wickedness and *turn to a holy and righteous God, has been silenced among so many Christian faith communities.*

Your Covenant With Your Heavenly Father Begins With *And* Is Maintained Through Repentance

By the grace of our holy and merciful God we are rescued out of the world’s darkness into His wonderful light and indwelling presence. That grace — His wonderful call to our spirit to respond to His Spirit — is accessed as we come to Him the way His Word calls us to. The Hebrew Scriptures set the stage of His redemptive work in the Newer Testament, making clear throughout that He has very defined parameters for those who enter His Kingdom.

In our Hebraic Article, *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*, we discuss the five stipulations our Father has revealed in His Word for entering into Covenant with you. His stipulations for ratifying and consummating His Covenant union with you are these:

1. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins *and* Continues with your **Repentance**
2. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins *and* Continues with your *agape (ahav)* **Love**
3. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins *and* Continues with your **Obedient Trust**
4. Your Salvation Pilgrimage Both Begins *and* Continues with Your **Forceful Conviction and Steadfast Determination**
5. Your Salvation Pilgrimage Both Begins *and* Continues with **You Forgiving Others**

[We encourage you to peruse this Hebraic Article for a fuller understanding of these scriptural requirements.]

Even though man-pleasing, false gospels of today have made repentance optional, our Father hasn’t. Living repentantly binds our hearts with His

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and restores the fellowship in which *His* perspective becomes *our* perspective.

Please keep in mind this particular aspect of His perspective as you scrutinize the condition of your own life: Your Lord does not want His “called-out one” to simply be a church-goer. He is establishing a Kingdom on earth among those He has *called out* to be separate from the world’s ways and standards (see 1 Peter 2:9). As His workmanship, He has called you out with a special purpose: to do your part in His body in love-grounded obedient trust. That ongoing, loving trust evidences to both the world and to His own that you belong to Jesus.

What has Lord Jesus called you out *from*? A world system that belongs to Satan and is manipulated to do his nefarious will. Just as Paul commissioned Timothy to expect to suffer as a soldier of Christ, we too are to realize that we’re in a battle against evil. We’re confronting a world that hates His righteousness in us and is going to respond to its father, the devil, to discredit and persecute those who bear His name.

All forms of religion are of the devil, even contemporary Christianity. In fact, your most virulent enemies will be those who are devout adherents of *religion*, including a Christianity that is enmeshed in man-centered “churchianity” but has lost focus on the supreme Lordship of Jesus in their lives.

Our Lord is establishing a Kingdom of obedient, repentant followers who love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and therefore serve Him in doing His will. Nothing less is expected of you if you truly belong to Him, for He has empowered you by His Spirit to actively and willingly fulfill His purposes.

A key purpose of any authentic follower of Jesus is the mission of reconcil-

iation between our gracious Father and desperately needy humanity:

All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given [you] the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to [you] the word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

This “ministry of reconciliation” is exactly what our Lord Jesus has called Sue and me to do through helping you to live repentantly out of love for our Lord Jesus. Every time you repent of that which has violated God by word, thought or deed, you are being reconciled anew with your heavenly Father and His Son Jesus! That precious direct access in His Spirit is the restoration of fellowship with God.

- **Examine your inner person closely. When was the last time you repented of any sin? Have you become so desensitized to sin that what God calls evil in His Word is rationalized or excused by you?**
- **Are you free of ALL unconfessed sin right now? Stop and scrutinize yourself. If you have unconfessed sin, you have no fellowship with the Father and Jesus. Does this even bother you? What will you do about it?**

It isn’t this *nation* that God has told us to help live repentantly. It is redeemed people like yourself who believe they belong to Him. *You* are the one He is concerned about if you’re living unrepentantly and bringing His name down among unbelievers in both this country and the rest of the world. If you are “fellowshipping” with others

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who share a common disregard for walking in Christ’s likeness and are compromising with the world’s ways, our Father is also concerned. Why? Your individual and collective tolerated, unconfessed sin is ***evil in His sight***.

In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus addresses the “called-out ones” about their responsibility to uphold **communal righteousness** in their fellowship with others. This passage is one of only two in which Jesus speaks directly of the “called-out ones”, His church. Out of love for both our Lord and our stumbling brother or sister, we must confront the one who is sinning that he or she might repent. Maintaining communal righteousness within the spiritual family is critical!

A faith community that’s dedicated to expanding the Kingdom must confront the unrepentant in their midst. Your companions influence the way in which you live, for better or for worse (Proverbs 13:20, 28:7; Revelation 1:9). If you tolerate or excuse sin in your faith family, you’ll be tempted to excuse sin in your own life — and your children are watching to see if your life lines up with your words! If the one you confront both individually and with witnesses doesn’t repent, he must be excluded from fellowship until he turns from his sin and is restored by our Father (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).

**The KINGDOM that Jesus is building
in the hearts of His followers requires
personal and communal righteousness
for true fellowship to exist —
both with Him and His Father
and with each other.**

Unrepentance halts all fellowship with the Father and Jesus! (See 1 John 1:6,7.) The KINGDOM of our Lord is

built upon the Cornerstone, King Jesus, and is manifested in the lives of those who live repentantly with a heart’s desire to please their Master and live in unbridled intimacy with Him.

The apostle Paul is God’s spokesman in his command to expel those who sin and refuse to repent. This process isn’t contingent on the say of just one person. Two or three witnesses are called upon to confirm that one who is sinning is refusing to repent — to not only confess but to also turn away from the sin.

When two or three are in agreement to expel the person who refuses to turn from his sin, the Lord Jesus is in their midst to uphold that action in heaven (Matthew 18:18-20).

By confronting a brother or sister who is walking in sin, you’re not *against* the person. You’re showing him or her *love* through being an instrument of reconciliation as well as restoration. And, you’re *for* restoring communal righteousness in your fellowship family.

(See Chapter 11 of our book ***Restoring the Early Church***, a free download, for more on communal righteousness.)

- **When was the last time you witnessed an unrepentant person being removed from fellowship? If you haven’t, is it because no one has unconfessed sin, or because no one wants to confront the unrepentant?**
- **Have you ever been accused of being “judgmental” when you’ve confronted sin in your faith community? What is God’s perspective on discerning and confronting sin, according to His Word?**

***“Isaiah was right when he prophesied
about you hypocrites; as it is written:
‘These people honor Me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from Me’”***

(Mark 7:6).

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Let’s define a hypocrite from the biblical perspective:

A hypocrite claims to belong to God, or falsely claims to do things on His behalf, but is neither known by Him nor does His will.

The word hypocrite is a Greek term for a stage actor, someone who is playing a role he really isn’t. So in our discussion, a hypocrite is pretending to be acceptable in God’s sight yet in reality is a deceiver.

If you look up “hypocrite(s) in a concordance, you’ll realize how deeply pained our Lord was by the religious leaders who foisted such guilt on the people. His voice vented anger at the white-washed tombs he called “Hypocrite!”—those who claimed to be serving God but were making people “*twice as much a son of hell as themselves*” (Matthew 23:15).

Hypocrisy in the religious arena is just as prevalent today. The religious leaders who are straining to perpetuate their position are failing to help their people live repentantly. If numbers in attendance is the measure of their success, you can be sure that communal righteousness is neither addressed nor practiced.

Yet Jesus is still rebuking those leaders whose chief concern is their own well-being and reputation: **“You hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to”** (Matthew 23:13).

Ask yourself this probing question: Are you a hypocrite in God’s sight? If you are, wouldn’t you want to know this while you’re still breathing so that you can repent and be restored with your Lord and lovingly hear from Him and

serve Him? Our Lord warns in Matthew 7:21-23 that there will be those in our midst who claim to do great things in God’s Name. While from man’s perspective they’re heralded as religious wonder-workers, from God’s perspective they are hypocrites. They’ve failed to do His will, and will be told straight away, **“I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”**

Matthew relates two key passages, 24:45-51 and 25:14-30, in which our Lord compares “faithful and wicked servants”. In each case the individual is judged on whether he carries out the *will of his Master*. This parameter is also how Jesus identifies those He considers His family: **“Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother”** (Matthew 12:50).

To fail to know the will of the Father is irresponsible for someone who claims to follow Jesus. To know His will and to not do it carries dire consequences. This is especially true when He has commanded His people repeatedly to “Repent!”

A key reason stands out for the chastisement coming upon this nation:

Western Christendom at large has failed to wholeheartedly seek the will of the Father and carry it out.

Too many “Christians” have been duped into complacency by hypocritical religious leaders who speak amusing pleasantries but avoid confrontation with sin and the holiness of a righteous God. Faith enactment consists of attending religious services and engaging with others in genial social activities that do nothing to fulfill Kingdom purposes.

Our loving Lord does not want to face these people at the Judgment Throne and tell them, “I never knew you.” Out of His wondrous love He is

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sending dark days of chastisement to give as many as possible a chance to repent. That’s why He has called the two of us to help prepare you to be light in these coming days of darkness.

Please, don’t wait for those dreadful days to come. Reexamine the purpose our Lord gave us for the Hebraic Restoration: **“Preparing the Family of Jesus to Be *Light in Darkness*”**.

Wouldn’t you rather be one of our Lord’s servants who is fully prepared to love and serve Him during the coming darkness rather than one He must chastise?

We encourage you to prayerfully go through each of these Lifebytes on repentance. Prayerfully discern His will for you and your household, making sure it aligns with His Word. Then put it into practice, no matter what it costs you. You’ll then be girded to go through the dark times as His light of hope and witness to those who are suffering without Him.

You may have noticed by the cover of this Lifebyte that fleeing the Nicolaitan religious establishment is essential if you’re to live according to God’s requirement for *communal righteousness*. Be certain that others you plan to fellowship with are in fellowship with our Lord BEFORE you fellowship with them.

Take seriously Paul’s warning to Timothy about those who love pleasure rather than loving God (2 Timothy 3:4,5). These aren’t “pagans”! These are folks who have a *form of godliness*; they may even live piously and practice religious activities. However, as Paul notes, they deny the *power* that’s needed to

live in *true godliness* — the power that only the indwelling Spirit of Jesus can give.

Paul leaves no room for doubt in his command regarding spiritual counterfeits: “Turn away from these. Have nothing to do with them!” (3:5). Their compromise will taint your own faith walk and tempt you to compromise as well. Thus is the name of Jesus brought down among those who observe you.

You know if living repentantly isn’t emphasized and upheld in your faith community. Disregard for communal righteousness is both unedifying as well as sinful for you and your family. Either abide by Matthew 18 and remove the unrepentant, or get out yourself!