

The Torch

Sunday February 21, 2021 • A weekly Newsletter of



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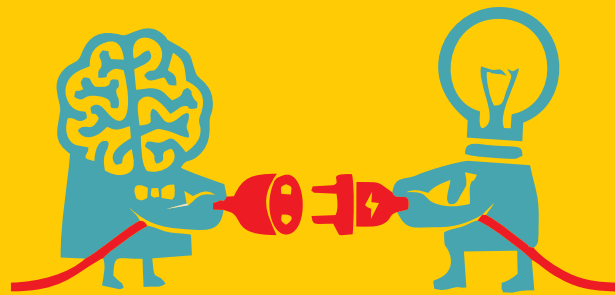
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BE OPEN TO MORE KNOWLEDGE

He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. - Acts 18:26 NIV

Apollos was a Christian Jew from Alexandria and a contemporary of the Apostle Paul, who played a very significant role in the development of the church in Corinth and Ephesus. The Bible described him as a learned man, with a thorough

knowledge of the Scriptures who had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately. What a great credential, one that the Bible testified to except that all these credentials had a great limitation. The same Bible says, "he knew only the baptism of John".

It was with all these qualities, positive and negative,

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that he preached the Word in the synagogue with a Christian couple named Priscilla and Aquila in attendance. They must have been impressed with his delivery but also noticed some misrepresentations in his ministrations and so took it upon themselves to inform him more adequately on the way of God. In the scripture that is the foundation text of today's devotionals, the bible says the couple noticed the boldness with which he preached the Word and after the additional teaching that he got from this couple, he was better equipped to play a greater role amongst the brethren. Armed with an introductory letter, possibly containing a testimonial of the new person that he had become because of the additional knowledge, he travelled to Achaia where he was found to be of great help to the believers there – Acts 18:27-28.

Before meeting with this couple and since he was not aware of any other baptism outside the one that he had been thought, he never felt anything was lacking in the knowledge he possessed and with the confidence he had in his instructors and in himself, he debated issues with other preachers and Apostles and there is no doubt that they saw one another as partners in the work of the ministry until the issue related to baptism came up. The disagreement on this issue was sufficient to create a division between them and the entire church in Corinth which the Apostle Paul had to address when he wrote his first letter to them. In that letter, he had appealed to them not to allow divisions amongst them, after all both Apollos and himself were mere messengers of the same master, who is the Almighty God and there was no way the two messengers can have any message different from what their master had sent them – 1Cor. 3:1-22. Such divisions were however expected, considering the fiery nature of both men and the conviction with which they implemented their Calling. Two great apostles of the Word who ordinarily should be complimenting one another had suddenly become like enemies. This is not because of the activities of negative spiritual forces but the knowledge deficit that existed in one of them.

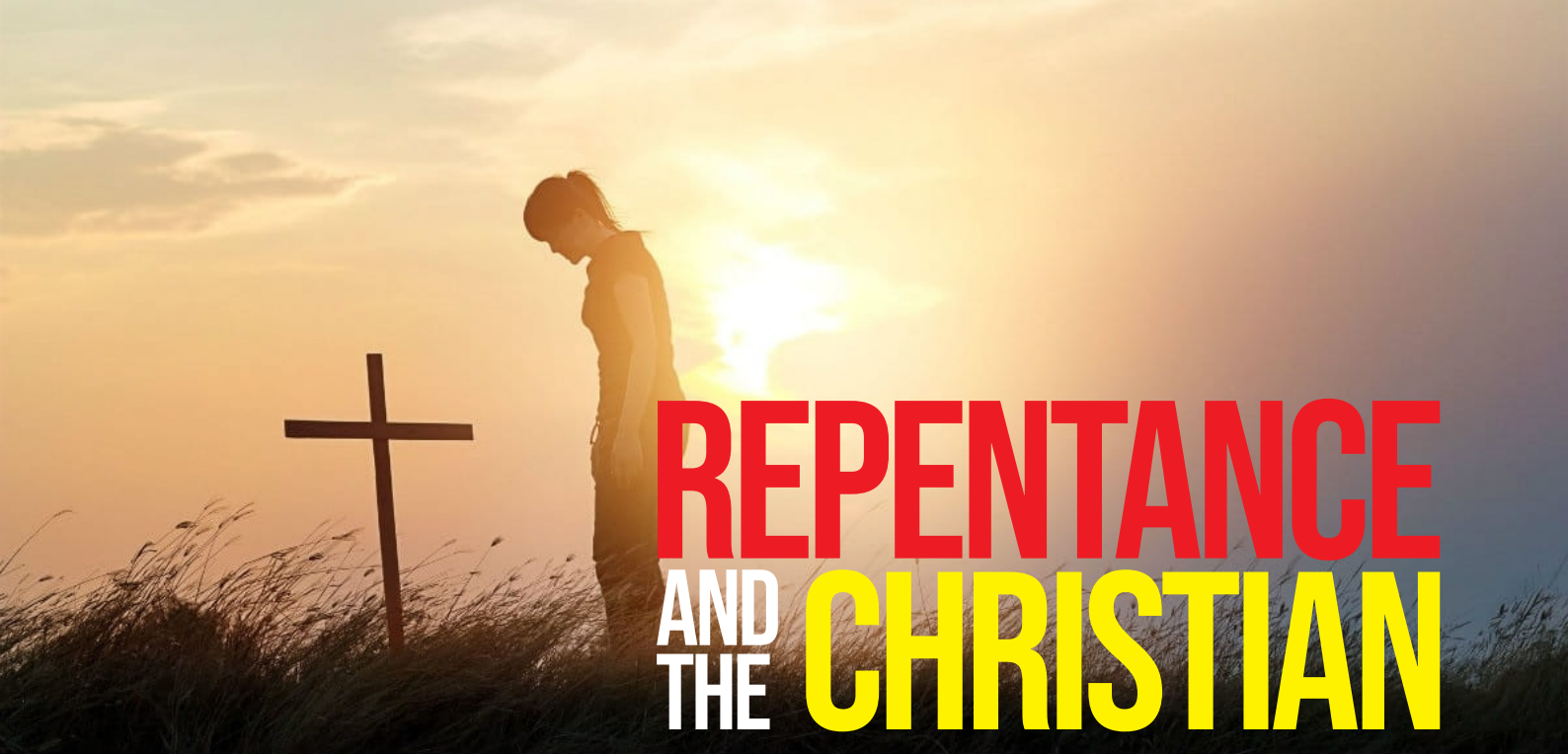
Similar situation is in existence amongst Christians today and as expected, has created divides in Christendom. Christianity today is fading fast, not because of attacks from other religious groups or the divisive activities of the devil but because

Christian leaders are struggling for supremacy for who has the true knowledge and interpretation of the scriptures. Christians have become enemies of one another because of the interpretation that their leaders have professed to have received from the Lord. Like Apollos, they are very fluent in communications, and preach the Word effectively such that they are able to convince many that their interpretation of the Word is the authentic and superior one, when compared to any other. The result is a divided church that is so decimated and is ineffective to fight Satan and his allies.

It took the intervention of a couple who probably did not belong to the clergy group to call in Apollos and explain the Way better to him, for him to realise that he had a knowledge deficit. By this time, several people who had followed his version of the Word had been misled. Thank God for His intervention in the life of Apollos through this couple but there is no assurance that all the people that he had misled also had this opportunity.

Many church leaders today actually need their own Priscilla and Aquila to save not only them, but several of their followers from the destruction that inadequate information is leading them to. The difference between success and failure most times is not about what one knows but what one does not know. Christians including their leaders need to always leave a space for the possibility that the knowledge they have can still be improved upon. That leaves open to them at all times the opportunity to perfect what they already know.

Everyone, leaders or followers are expected to be growing as no one is perfect in knowledge. This implies that all will constantly be refreshed with new knowledge on a regular basis if they are to experience growth, a knowledge that can change completely their perception of an issue and the source of that change can be one that is most unlikely or unexpected. No matter how much you think you know, always remain open to sincerely rating the knowledge you have with every standard that you come across as there may be a reason to want to adjust your position based on the new knowledge. That way you can prevent not only yourself, but people that may see you as a mentor from becoming victims of incomplete knowledge. May God continue to enrich us all with knowledge in Jesus name. Amen.



REPENTANCE AND THE CHRISTIAN

Just as sin is a common act constantly in reference by Christian ministers and leaders when attempts are being made to re-connect a Christian who has backslided to the Almighty God or winning over a non-Christian to the Lord, repentance is also equally important as a pre-requisite for receiving such grace. Infact, it is practically impossible to complete a ministration on sin without making reference to repentance. This is because, whereas sin is an act that takes human beings away from the Almighty God, repentance is an important step in the process of reconciling such an individual with the Lord. This act of repentance involves the taking of a number of steps, which although are not clearly defined but must be taken for repentance to be genuine and be acceptable.

Forgiveness which is the ultimate objective of the act repentance is the graceful act of the Almighty God to overlook the transgression of an individual such that the individual is able to avoid the penalty despite such deserving to be so penalised. It is done despite the Almighty God being a sovereign God whose decision if He does decide to penalise such an individual cannot be questioned or reversed. However, this grace is not just dispensed as there is a pre-requisite to be met by the one that desires such grace which is for such to sincerely and genuinely repent.

Repentance which is the noun of the verb “to repent” is the feeling or expression of regret about ones action. Being an action, it must be visible to all but more importantly, it must be genuine which

means that there must be sincerity by the one that claims to be repenting. The act may be visible to man but the most important personality that is in consideration when Christian repentance is the focus is the Almighty God who has not only the ability to see the physical act of repentance but also the sincerity of the act 1Kgs. 8:39; 1Chr. 28:9; 1Sam. 16:7. He it is that will also decide whether the act of repentance merits forgiveness or not. This is why it is important that the one that seeks forgiveness from the Lord should not simply make verbal statements or only put up physical actions that give the impression that such is repentant, but must also be very sincere about such an actions or pronouncements. It is therefore comical when Christians or anyone for that matter is told to repent in order to receive forgiveness and what is seen is an outward display of actions that give the impression of repentance with no sincerity of purpose. The truth is that repentance is, and should always be a product of inner conviction. The following are necessary considerations that the one that claims to be repentant must observe.

The one who is genuinely repentant must have;

1. Identified an act or acts that run foul of the instructions of the Almighty God which he/she has committed. It is simply impossible to be asking for forgiveness for no act of transgression. It may be true that there are acts that may have been committed unknowingly but to claim ignorance even after committing such act is unacceptable. Ignorance is not an acceptable excuse with the

Lord. The one that is seeking forgiveness must be able to recall those acts of transgressions before seeking forgiveness for them else the basis of repentance will be faulty. It will be simply impossible for an individual to promise not to repeat an act that he/she is not aware of committing or consider as a wrong act. The sin for which repentance is sought must be identified and acknowledged as sin by the individual.

2. Such must be aware of the extent of damage and pain that such an act of indiscretion has caused the Almighty God and other people. Again it is impossible to have any feeling of remorse if the pain or damage caused by such act is not known to the one that transgressed. The scriptures says that when we sin after receiving forgiveness, we are nailing Jesus to the cross again – Heb. 6:4-6. This will mean nothing to the one who does not even know the pain and humiliation that Jesus went through on the cross to save mankind from having to pay the wages of sin which is spiritual death. This is just as such acts of transgressions can also cause physical pain to human victims of such acts and it will be impossible to feel appropriately remorseful if the pain and damage caused is not known to the one that is repenting.

3. Such must have felt really sorry about this negative effect on the victims of such acts – 2Cor. 7:10. There is nothing to repent from if the transgressor believes that the victim of such acts deserve the pain and humiliation received as a result of his/her acts of transgression. This is because such a person feels justified in putting up the act that is now being regarded as transgression and so has no regrets for putting up such act. Any professed repentance by such is definitely deceitful and false. The one who is repenting must feel very bad when the effect of his/her act on others or on the Almighty God and His Christ is made known.

4. There must be an intense desire to retribute where possible. Restitution is the act of restoring something to its previous state. In the case of a transgressor, it is an attempt to repair the damage done as a result of such acts of transgression. This is very necessary although not always possible. The Almighty God prescribes some acts of restitution in the Holy Scriptures with regards to some acts of transgression but this cannot be said of every act of transgression of man – Deut. 22:1-29. The one that

is in a position to retribute but does not do so can never claim to be repentant as that can also be interpreted to mean that he/she feels justified to have committed the transgression. Return what was taken or repair what was damaged where necessary as part of the repentance process before seeking for forgiveness.

5. Finally there must be a resolution not to get involved in such acts again in the future. The one that is repenting must have taken a resolution to not get involved with such acts again. That means that such has not only identified the error, but also has mapped out physical strategies and prayer points to avoid such errors in future. This does not mean that such may not find him/her self in the same error again but the intention being what the Almighty God is looking at is what matters.

As much as these are steps in the process of repentance, they all tend to happen in a flash during the period preceding request for forgiveness such that the boundaries of each step are not defined but nevertheless, they must be taken. It is simply impossible for the repentance to be genuine if any of these steps has been omitted. However, genuine repentance is always met by forgiveness from the Almighty God. Everyone who genuinely repents will be saved from the repercussion of such acts of transgressions – Acts 26-19-29. The one that has genuinely repented will not delight in sin especially the one for which forgiveness was sought. It is simply hypocritical for Christians to come before the throne of grace repeatedly claiming to be repentant of the same sin and expecting to receive forgiveness as such an act is most likely not genuine and sincere and the Almighty God to whom such comes to cannot be deceived. The one who repeatedly seeks forgiveness for any particular act of transgression or any act of transgression for that matter seeks to deceive the Almighty God and such attempts will always fail as He cannot be mocked or deceived. Sincerely and genuinely repent from your sins today and you are assured of forgiveness and a life befitting of one with conferred righteousness. May that be your portion in Jesus name. Amen.

Please send all your reactions to:

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