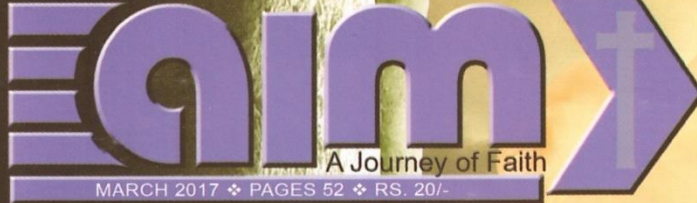


THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNICATION TRUST



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- ❖ Personal spiritual renewal
- ❖ On the edge of the cliff
- ❖ A renewed heart

LENT: TIME TO REPENT & RENEW

U-TURN TOWARDS GOD'S WAY

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF EFI PUBLICATION TRUST



A Journey of Faith

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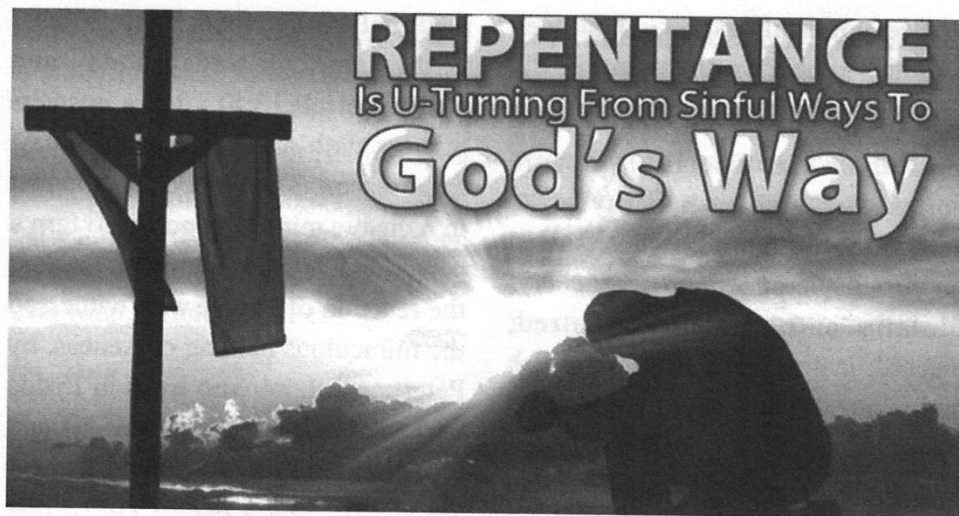
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Anand David

Have you ever wondered why some don't amend their ways even after official reprimand, psychological counselling, public shaming, arbitration, short-term punishment, penalty, grace period, dismissal, imprisonment or bail? They just bounce back with impunity only to carry on with their political chicanery, stealing, illegal trading, double dealing, false accounting, blackmailing, immorality, police complaints, law suits, alibis and scheming.

Perhaps, you can identify someone like that in the government or business or your church, organisation, neighbourhood or your own family! Repentance is that hard, because the 'self' of a man doesn't die. An egotistic woman will never accept her sins and would rather glory in her

rights to be the unstoppable person that she is. Jezebel was unquestionably so! Repentance is the opposite of rebellion. It is to acknowledge your wrong doing, and feel sorry for it before God and seek His forgiveness in order to live a dedicated life, free of sin. It includes reparation, where it may apply.

A. Why repent?

God calls us to be holy: Jesus preached repentance, as an essential message of the gospel. Apostles preached repentance and holiness in the early church. Peter admonished, 'just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Pet 1:15-16) Young Joseph fled from adultery with his mistress. God blessed him to become the prime minister of Egypt, later in life. Paul admonished Timothy

to flee youthful lusts. God blessed Timothy to be a worthy pastor of the Ephesian church at a young age.

God hates sin: The Bible openly portrays sin with such clarity - 'the acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God' (Gal 5:19-21).

King Solomon found that 'There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers (Pr 6:16-19). A true worshipping of God loathes sin, even the very thought it!

It is self deception to claim we have no sin: Take for instance, unbelief, which many don't treat as a sin. The father of a boy, who was afflicted by evil spirits, confessed his sin of unbelief and pleaded Jesus to overcome it. (Cf Mk 9:24). Many don't believe that Jesus still does miracles, like listening to one's desperate prayer (or somebody's on his behalf) and granting remarkable healing. That

is unbelief, because 'Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever' (Heb 13:8). Jesus answers prayers with a miracle, even today, for a reason. The wonder component in a visible miracle is potent to turn a person to Christ, in humility. Look at the reaction of people who witnessed the miraculous healing of Aeneas, by Peter: 'All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him (Aeneas) and turned to the Lord' (Acts 9:35).

Some view a miracle as though it is an unforgivable crime to be suspected and probed for eternity! Much like a warped Sub-Inspector, who tortures a victim to withdraw the case or flogs an innocent man till he 'confesses' that he himself was the criminal! It is unbelief

When you prescribe limits to God's power and see that He snugly fits into your own fancy definition! Beware of unbelief!

The Bible says, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us' (1 Jn 1:8).

We have a long-suffering God: Peter himself repented of his sin of denying Christ, and was blessed to be a leading apostle later, whereas Judas didn't repent, and only ended his life to his own doom. Both were at fault, but

had opposing destinies. There is still room at the Cross, for a penitent sinner. Apostle Peter says, 'The Lord isn't really being slow about His promise, as some people think. No, He is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent' (2 Pet 3:9).

B. How to Repent?

Feel Godly Sorrow: If you can't take responsibility for your sins, you can't truly repent either. Some are boldfaced, saying, 'God hates sin, but loves the sinner' and they continue to live in open sin. You may ask, 'Why should I repent, I don't offend or hurt anybody by what I do? Or, 'I know what I do, but everybody does it!' Or science has proof that such an act or behaviour is absolutely normal, thus assigning the blame to a particular gene or chemical in the body. Some ask, 'How can a God of love condemn anyone to hell?'

Some think of hell only a mythical ploy to deter potential sinners. Well, you surely offend God or a family member or a neighbour, with your secretive or presumptuous sins, be it a whispering gossip or a boastful attitude. Paul says, 'yet now I am happy ... because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended ... Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation ...' (2 Cor 7:9-10).

Yield Humbly to the Holy Spirit: A recent WHO report declares, 'since the beginning of the epidemic, more than seven Crore people have been infected with the HIV virus and about half of them died of HIV.' A little temptation to begin with, will finally destroy a person's dignity, his personal worth and would even kill him. Just as a glutton loves food, so does a sinner who loves his perverted ways. Just as a man would not give away his pet dog, people don't simply get rid of sin. Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit thus:

When He comes, He will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in Me;

... about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned' (Jn 16:8-11). As repentance is not a logical or automatic process, you need the Holy Spirit's help in convicting you, as He searches your heart.

Confess and Turn away from Sin: The accusers of the women caught red-handed in adultery, could hardly see themselves as sinners. Are you hiding

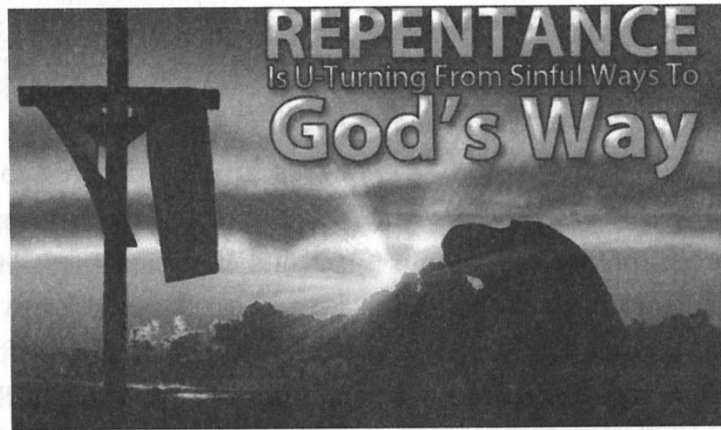
in your 'comfort' zone by accusing or blaming others for your sin? The Bible says, 'People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy' (Pro 28:13). Even an evil thought is a sin. Simon, the sorcerer, marvelled when he witnessed a miracle, but thought that he can buy the power of the Holy Spirit for money and run a 'show' for his own glory. But Peter rebuked, "May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God's gift can be bought! You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God. Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin' (Acts 8:20-23).

Shun Inordinate Affections: Once a gentleman in his fifties confided to me his struggle of being infatuated with a teenage girl, and sought counsel. Prophet 'Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you ... rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines'" (1 Sam 7:3). Idolatry is more serious than

this: If you love anyone or anything or any activity or even an ideology more than God, it is accounted as idolatry, in God's assessment. Paul esteemed the law more than the grace of God, and became a self-righteous, nitpicking, religious bigot. But 'as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do"' (Acts 9:3-6). Thereafter, Paul repented and witnessed about the saving grace of God, all his life. Is God your first Love? Do you value His grace? *(to be continued)*

Anand David manages a bilateral aid program in a diplomatic mission in Delhi. In his free time, he volunteers to preach, write, counsel and pray. His Blog is: www.voiceofhelp.in





Anand David

Set it Right: Repentance involves setting the record straight where it applies, without delay! For instance, if you have stolen public money or anything that belonged to another person, your repentance is never complete by a mere acknowledgment of it, until you return it to its owner. If you have borrowed money, and have no intention to return, you need to find a way to earn harder, save and promptly return it to the lender, within a reasonable time frame.

If you have gossiped and tarnished the image of a good man, you need to repent publically of what you said behind that person's back and give due credit to the one who deserves appreciation. The Bible calls it restitution in the New Testament, highlighting the exemplary repentance of Zacchaeus. 'Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have

cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!" (Luke 19:8).

Results of Repentance:

Forgiveness: 'He (John, the Baptist) was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven' (Mk 1:4)

Restored relationship: Some can't tolerate people of other castes or backgrounds coming to the Lord or their fellowship. But let's be inclusive, when a sinner turns to the Lord! 'When the others (Jews) heard this ... they said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life"' (Acts 11:18). Unwillingness to forgive a repenting sinner is no doubt a sin. Forgiveness will help restore a mutually supportive relationship.

A Reformed Life: John the Baptist says, 'Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God' (Mt 3:8). This involves receiving a new spirit and new heart, as gifts from God. The Bible says, 'Put all your rebellion behind you, and find yourselves a new heart and a new spirit' (Ezek 18:31). Do you have the proof that you are born again? The demonic had a proof of new life. 'They saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind' (Mk 5:15).

Joyous Life: Jesus observed, 'there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent' (Lk 15:7). May be the angels rejoice, saying, 'Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit' (Ps 32:1-2). What a blessing to have a joyous life that money can't buy!

For some, repentance is just another damage control exercise. They stage it craftily, with an old godly pastor

by their side, as they 'emotionally' regret their 'mistakes' and say they have been 'foolish' or were victims of circumstances, and airbrush their fallen image, with self pity! They assume God will ignore the facts they have deliberately hid in the closet, from public scrutiny. Psalmist David understood the sobering truth: 'O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness; you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked.'

Therefore, the proud may not stand in your presence, for you hate all who do evil. You will destroy those who tell lies. The Lord detests murderers and deceivers.' (Ps 5:4-5). Knowing that well, he pleaded with tears, thus: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me' (Ps 51:10-13). It's time to stop pretending. Repent and be blessed, abundantly!

Anand David works for a diplomatic mission in Delhi. In his free time, he volunteers to preach, write, counsel and pray. His blog is: www.voiceofhelp.in

