



IS PERSONAL GROWTH POSSIBLE WHILE HOLDING OFFICE?

TO: LEGISLATORS

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A common rap on political leaders is that they change for the worse while in office. Given the axiom that power corrupts, such an observation is more accurate than not. But is it possible to change for the better while in office? And if so, how?

The Bible has much to say about how God expects a person to change; as a matter of fact, the Scriptures say that those who are in Christ *will* change for the better! 2 Corinthians 5:17 states,

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

But how exactly is this change supposed to occur? Or better, how is the believer (to use the appropriate theological term) sanctified according to the Bible?

The Scriptures are very specific as to how we should understand and participate in our spiritual growth – and we need to become familiar with, and reject several invalid theories on this subject. Read on.

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I. INTRODUCTION

There are at least four major historical/theological views proffered in terms of how one is to go about changing for the better. Here is a brief overview of the four leading positions on sanctification (in no particular order of importance):

A. TOTAL PERFECTIONISM

One understanding of Sanctification is summarily referred to as Christian Perfectionism; it originated with Charles Wesley. Folks buying into this viewpoint believe in a second work of grace, post salvation, which catapults the believer into a state of “sinlessness” here on earth. Another name for this is “entire sanctification.” Believers may make mistakes, but they are no longer sinning. One major problem with this viewpoint is already obvious to those of us who are married: Every married person who begins to think he or she might be perfect has a close friend who knows better! ☺

B. PASSIVE GROWTH

The second major camp of Christian Sanctification theory is the Keswick (pronounced “Kezeek”) school of thought. In this view the believer passively grows in his or her relationship with Christ. One need only “surrender” to grow spiritually. These folks tend to over spiritualize things. Just keep drinking in the Bible and you will mature: “Let go and let God” is an appropriate summary. They believe that the redeemed automatically change for the better.

C. PENANCE AND REMORSE

Whereas three of the four positions on Sanctification are held by believers, this third one is practiced more commonly in false religions and cults than among believers. It is known as penance. Penance is the idea of imposing on one’s self a personal payment and punishment for sin – it represents a human attempt to balance the scales of justice – to assuage the conscience short of a

forgiving Savior. In the world of penance-seekers, neither justification (one’s salvation) nor sanctification (one’s spiritual growth) is imputed from God via His atoning for sin (per the truths of 1John 1:9 and many other passages). Rather, one’s salvation and sanctification are earned by personal merit. One is sanctified via self-propitiation (“to satisfy”) of previous wrongdoings by conducting offsetting good deeds, works or prayers. In this camp a person is “guilted” into change, which does (I suppose) evoke some change, but at best is an ugly master.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE SAVIOR, AND ARE ATTEMPTING TO ASSUAGE GUILT AND EARN THEIR OWN WAY TO HEAVEN, THE PENANCE CAMP BECOMES AN ATTRACTIVE OPTION

The overarching problem with these first three viewpoints is this: they are biblically unfounded.

D. PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

The forth position on sanctification is the one that is supported by Scripture: Progressive Sanctification. The Bible repeatedly indicates that a lifelong cycle of sin, *repentance* and renewal progresses and catapults one toward Christlikeness—and this process of growth will only be completed when one goes home to be with the Lord. Growth and change are accomplished through the believer’s active participation and discipline with the Holy Spirit, who prompts and energizes the overall function. Notice what Philippians 2:12-13 states in this regard:

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.



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Work out *katargazomai* **your salvation** is not to be understood as an inference that salvation is attained by personal merit or works¹ (contr. Romans 3:21-24; Ephesians 2:8, 9; John 1:12; Romans 10:9). Rather the subject of the passage pertains to sanctification, more specifically, the responsibility that the believer must possess in *response* to their salvation. **It is God who is at work in you** evidences the causal agent (God) who engenders and empowers human responsibility in the believer. Other passages that undergird this biblical position on Progressive Sanctification are Philippians 3:13,14 and Romans 6:19 (cf. 1Corinthians 9:24-27; 15:58; 2Corinthians 7:1; Galatians 6:7-9; Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 3:1-17; Hebrews 6:10,11; 12:1,2; 2Peter 1:5-11; Acts 1:8). These passages are all worth noting and pondering before moving forward in the study. They underscore the means by which God changes people for the better!

II. SCRIPTURAL BASICS RELATED TO CHANGE

In summary, human responsibility is catalytic to change and growth—but more specifically, in what way? What are some scriptural basics related to change? Here are three key insights that indicate how God, in a very practical way, elicits change in your life.

A. ALL CHANGES MUST ALIGN WITH SCRIPTURE

This is foundational, and needs to be mentioned at the outset. If the Bible is inspired by God and is the basis of all truth, it follows that it must be the *sole* epistemological source (that is, the sole grounds for knowledge) as it relates to our faith and practice – and the changes we ponder. Notice Scripture’s internal testimony regarding itself in 2Timothy 3:16 and 1Thessalonians 2:13:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...

The specific purposes in this passage for which God gave us His Word are: **for teaching, reproof, correction and training**. All these words connote the connection between the Word and change! The Bible is **profitable** for change because it contains the benchmark standard of what we should aspire to be.

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

Simple and straightforward: Scripture states of itself that it intends to **perform its work**, or change, in those who **believe** in Christ.

It follows that since the Bible is God’s Word to man, that every change one makes should align with it – assuring us that all changes will be for the better; the Scriptures are the basis and barometer for right changes. 2Corinthians 10:5 amplifies and underscores this first point when it says,

...bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

B. ONE ADMONISHES ANOTHER WITH SCRIPTURE IN ORDER TO PRODUCE CHANGE

In 1Thessalonians 5:14 Paul states an additional, and very practical way in which God elicits change in the life of the believer:

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

If the Word of God is the benchmark for change, it stands to reason that it is also the conduit one must utilize in counseling or mentoring or better, **admonishment** of another to change. **Admonish** means “to express warning or disapproval,

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especially in a gentle, earnest, or solicitous manner.”² (Note that this is where the term *Nouthetic Christian Counseling* comes from, which is the best counseling philosophy amongst all counseling philosophies because it is based in the veracity, objectivity, authority and ability of the Word of God in contrast to the subjectivity of human opinion). Change is most apt to occur when one uses the Word in confronting someone who needs to change. Such confronting is more authoritative than subjectively saying, “Well I think you need to change because you bug me!” This passage **urges** believers to use the Word to create positive change in others.

In addition, change best results from using the Word as one’s authority because Isaiah 55:11 proclaims that God’s Word has innate power in and of itself – power to change someone when it is the basis of another’s **admonition**.

So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

1Corinthians 1:18 amplifies this same astounding truth regarding the internal power of God’s Word:

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

States Hebrews 4:12 in summary of the power of the Word to create change via **admonition**:

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword...

God’s means of changing us for the better is to use others in combination with His Word to pique our conscience in order to solicit a positive response.

**C. THE RESPONSE TO ADMONITION
NEED BE REPENTANCE**

States the Word of God in 2Timothy 2:25...

With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.

The proper biblical response to the **admonitions** of another who is utilizing the Word of God is not “I’m already perfect; passivity; or “I’ll do some penance.” Rather, this passage reveals it need be one of **repentance** *metanoia*, which means “a change of mind, direction and purpose.” Biblically, **repentance** is where real change in an individual begins. It also stands to reason that biblically, apart from seminal **repentance**, there is no developmental change.

Note also in the 2Timothy passage that Scripture reveals here and elsewhere (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2Corinthians 7:9,10; Ephesians 2:7; 2Timothy 2:25) that **repentance** does not come from ourselves, but is produced by God’s sovereign grace! In other words, like the faith that is necessary to believe in Christ (e.g. Ephesians 2:8, 9) our response of **repentance** too is a gift from God. One who is trapped in sin and wants to change should therefore cry out in humility, “God have mercy on me and grant me the gift of **repentance** from my sin!” “Pique my conscience!”

**REPENTANCE IS THE STARTING POINT
THAT LEADS TO LASTING, POSITIVE
CHANGE**

Any attempts at change without first, a God-given **repentance** are futile says Jeremiah 13:23:

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil?



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Jeremiah's point is that sinners cannot change the essence of their very nature. Therefore, the only way one can change is with God's help. Crying out to Him in humility, brokenness and contrition for His enabling help is the starting point of positive, permanent change.

WHAT THEN ARE THE BIBLICAL INDICATORS OF REPENTANCE? WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HUMAN SORROW AND TRUE REPENTANCE? IN ORDER TO BEST ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, STUDY CAREFULLY THE ELEMENTS OF TRUE REPENTANCE AS MENTIONED BY PAUL IN 2CORINTHIANS 7:9-11.

If God-borne **repentance** (versus human sorrow) is the first step, the foundational key to positive, lasting change and spiritual growth, then it is critically important to make sure your understanding of **repentance** is biblically accurate. What are the biblical indicators of true repentance?

III. THE CONTEXT OF THE INSTRUCTION ON TRUE REPENTANCE

Study carefully the eight indicators of true repentance that Paul lists in 2Corinthians 7:9-11. I will underline them and then elaborate on them in what follows.

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what

vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

In this portion of 2Corinthians, Paul is tracing over the past relationship he has had with the body of believers in Corinth. In brief summary, during his second missionary journey, he spent 18 months establishing this church. After departing, he then wrote a letter (that has been lost), which confronted the immorality that, subsequently, he had heard existed there (referenced in and by 1Corinthians 5:9). Paul had heard that among other matters, divisions existed in the church, and so he penned this second Corinthian letter (1Cor.) in response (which is part of the Canon of Scripture, vis-à-vis in actuality the second letter).

Later, after having sent Timothy to Corinth (1Cor. 4:17; 16:10,11), Paul found out that self-styled false apostles now inhabited the assembly, and in their zeal for power, they had disparaged Paul and tried to convince the congregation to no longer follow his teachings. When he learned of this upsetting news, Paul immediately departed (from Ephesus) to visit Corinth. To his deep chagrin, upon his arrival he soon tasted the bitter fruit of the false teachers, now suddenly experiencing the disloyalty of so many in the flock – a flock he had in a human sense, labored to establish. I can only imagine how this must have deeply hurt him: to think that others would and could steal away all that you had labored to create in the power of the Holy Spirit! This is commonly and accurately referred to as Paul's "Painful Visit." Upon the conclusion of his visit and return to Ephesus, he authored what is now commonly referred to as the "Severe Letter" (ref. 2 Cor. 2:4 which mentions it) sending it to Corinth via his beloved, loyal disciple Titus. (The "Severe Letter" in actuality then is the third Corinthian letter and is not in the Canon either). Upon Titus' eventual reconnection with Paul, Titus gave a surprisingly warm report as to the Corinthian

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church's acceptance of Paul's "Severe Letter." Specifically, many had *repented* of their rebellion against the Apostle; and Paul was overjoyed to learn of this (as per the text under study herein in 2Cor.). It is in this context that the words of 2Corinthians chapter 7 stand out. (2Corinthians is actually Paul's fourth letter to them).

In this specific passage under study, Paul delineates on common principles relative to the subject matter at hand: *what connotes true repentance in the life of the believer?* There is perhaps no better portion of Scripture in the entire Bible that unveils poignant insights relative to the definition, existence and manifestations of true repentance – the germinating key we have seen to positive, permanent change.

IV. EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE REPENTANCE

True genuine repentance and change, states Paul, is characterized by at least eight attitudes that are motivated by God's sanctifying presence in the life of the believer.³ "Paul expands [on the matter of godly sorrow] into a whole series of acts or dispositions, all of which are inspired by that sorrow according to God." (*The Expositors Bible, Second Corinthians*). These characteristics follow.

D. EARNESTNESS

When a believer expresses sorrow in a godly manner, there will be a sense of **earnestness** *spoude* on his or her behalf to eagerly and assertively pursue a righteous course. There will be "speed involved in the carrying out of a matter...a willingness to do good will" (*NIDONTT*). Herein is the initial reaction of repentance that is borne from above. "This is an attitude that ends indifference to sin and complacency about evil and deception" (*TMSB*). The first earmark then, of genuine repentance is that godly sorrow, once present, will produce a sense of effort and hurry that is self-motivated from within. There is a desire to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt. 3:8).

E. VINDICATION

States *NICNT* in regards to this specific characteristic, "When they [the unrepentant Corinthian believers] thought of the infamy which sin had brought upon the church, they were quite eager to clear themselves of complicity in it and angry with themselves that they had ever allowed such a thing to be." Here is the second mark of true repentance: "A desire to clear one's name of the stigma that accompanies sin. The repentant sinner restores the trust and confidence of others by making his genuine repentance known" (*TMSB*). There exists an **earnestness** to outwardly rectify, **vindicate** *apologia* that which the sin caused. Conversely,

THE FALSELY REPENTANT ARE CHARACTERIZED BY AN ATTITUDE THAT REMAINS STAYED ON SELF. THERE IS MORE CONCERN ABOUT DAMAGE TO PERSONAL IMAGE THAN THERE IS PUNCTUALITY TO REMEDY A MATTER

The falsely repentant remain hung-up on themselves, and the self-ramifications of their actions: their reputation and their standing amongst peers remains more important than making things right with the party they offended. In order to grow and change we must be truly repentant, meaning we seek out others whom we have offended, asking for their forgiveness, and thereby **vindicate**, exonerate, a matter. Put another way, God-glorification eclipses self-preservation.

F. INDIGNATION

The Greek word for **indignation** *aganaktesis* is used elsewhere in several other gospel narratives to communicate the idea of being angered by one's own wrongful actions. The English word "agonize" is a derivative of this. The early Church Father, Chrysostom, interpreted this portion of the passage to mean that the authentically repentant believer will be characterized by a personal **indignation** or agony "because of the scandal they had permitted



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to continue unchecked in the church and the consequent affront to the holy name of God.” Herein we see another clear indication of real repentance: the believer will possess an internal hatred and anger over their sin and a discontent relative to the **indignity** it has brought on the Lord’s name and His church. There exists an unmistakable inward unsettling.

THIS SELF INDIGNATION IS A BLESSING FROM GOD THAT CAN BE LIKENED TO THE INTERNAL MOLTEN PRESSURE FOUND IN A VOLCANO

There will be an authentic self-hatred that brews inside the repentant believer’s heart – a self-hatred that can only find its release through total rectification with the offended party or parties.

G. FEAR

In the case of the wayward Corinthian believers, they **feared** *phobos* the apostolic authority of the one to whom they had been disloyal. They **feared** that he could seek retribution for their sinful ways “with a rod” (cf. 1Cor. 4:21). A manifest characteristic of true repentance means there will be a healthy **fear** not only of God, but also of His ambassadors. Consciously aware and on the heart of the Holy Spirit-sensitized repentant believer is the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:20...

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Fellow believers are His **ambassadors** and no different than in the time of the Apostles, part of the ongoing charge to Christ’s **ambassadors** today is to **admonish** wayward saints. (Cf. Matt. 18:15-20; 1Tim. 1:19,20; 1Cor. 5:1-5). Sinning believers who are being moved to repentance will possess a growing fear of another believer(s) who is bringing legitimate charges against them – especially if their sin is known to all and well documented.

To summarize the first four points, the genuinely repentant are those who possess an **earnestness** to **vindicate** themselves with an offended party. This motivation stems from a self-**indignation** and **fear** of the retributive judgment of a Holy and Righteous God who manifests His judgment through His **ambassadors**. A healthy **fear** of God and His representatives (Eph. 4:11) leads to repentance and subsequent positive change.

H. LONGING

The Greek word translated **longing** *zelos* is the same base word for the English word **zealous**. “This could be translated as ‘yearning’ or ‘a longing for’ and refers to the desire of the repentant sinner to restore the relationship with the one who was sinned against” (*TMSB*). Akin to #2 (the **vindication** of self which has in mind the forensic, outward detail given to clearing up the matter and situation) the **longing** mentioned here relates more to a vehement desire stemming from an internal aspiration of the heart.⁴ The Corinthian believers (in their repentance) possessed a **zealous** desire to honor Paul and his apostolic authority. Simultaneously and conversely, they strongly desired to repudiate those in their midst who had caused the schism. In their sobriety over their sin, they possessed a **yearning** to follow Paul’s example, one of wholehearted devotion to the cause of Christ. All of these attitudes express a motivated-by-God compunction to do the right thing. Why? John Murray states, “[True] regeneration is the renewing of the heart and mind, and the renewed heart and mind must act according to their nature” (*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pg. 106). Birthed by the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of the genuine believer, God-compelled repentance always **yearns** and **longs** for right relationships with other people. In Romans 12:18 Paul summarily embodies all of these characteristics when he states the manifest attitudinal posture of Spirit-indwelled individuals: “if possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” Repentant individuals possess this strong desire.



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I. ZEAL

A sixth indicator of “from above” motivated repentance is an attitude of **zeal** *epipotesis*. Resultant of repentance is the desire the Corinthian believers possessed to take up Paul’s defense and stand against the false teachers who had led them astray from the one who founded their ministry. States *NICNT*, [the Corinthian believers desired] “to see the restoration of their former relationship of trust and affection.” Their response to Paul’s Severe Letter was not one of anger, but one of sobriety, accepting and realizing that they had been disloyal to the Apostle’s teaching. Their repentance produced this subsequent **zeal** to now do the right thing. They had **zeal** to reaffirm their love and allegiance for him. To the contrary, people who are unrepentant or humanly sorrowful in a selfish way will remain disloyal and avoid associating with the person(s) that they have offended. Zeal to prove one’s loyalty to the one previously offended is a good litmus test relative to true repentance.

J. AVENGING OF WRONG

Notice the progression of these eight characteristics of true repentance. Perhaps the strongest indication of God-birthed repentance is this one, because it is hardest to perform by human or selfish means. The Greek word translated here into three English words to convey the meaning **Avenging of Wrong** *ekdikesis* conveys the idea that in God-empowered repentance, the overriding concern is for justice to be done. States one commentator, “he wants to see the sin avenged no matter what it might cost him.” Whether or not in our home passage Paul was referring to the Corinthians avenging of the wrong relative to their interpersonal relationship, or the Corinthians avenging of wrong in having allowed the false apostles to divide their loyalties does not matter. In both cases, the now-humble Corinthian believers had a desire to seek full requital. The all-consuming objective was to put their house in order no matter what the cost.

GOD-EMPOWERED REPENTANCE IS WILLING TO PAY WHATEVER THE COST IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE FULL RESOLUTION**K. INNOCENT IN THE MATTER**

The last characterizing word that Paul chooses to express what, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he defines to be true repentance was the Corinthians’ **innocent** *hagnos* relative to their past sin. The Greek word here for **innocent** *hagnos* means “clear” or “pure, holy.” He chose this word because the connotation of it has to do with a ritual purity. Without going into greater details or illustrations of early word use, the idea being carried forth is that if a procedure was followed, then purity resulted. It follows that Paul would use it last on his list of characteristics. Paul’s word choice displays a beautiful, human illustration of the theology behind 1John 1:9...

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Importantly and conclusively, the Corinthian believers, in Paul’s mind, were now **innocent** of the matter because they had confessed and repented of their sin as was more than evident by the seven previous new attitudes and actions indicated in this insightful passage. Of further interest, the Greek word chosen by Paul was also used to express “a compliment for faultless execution of an office” (*NIDONTT*). Therein is another glimpse into Paul’s careful choice of words: he is complimenting their actions while declaring them **innocent in the matter**. How fitting and gracious this word is for conveying finality and closure!

Paul is a big enough person to not rehearse their sin here; he simply calls it **the matter**. Why? In that they had satisfactorily taken care of their sin as evidenced by their actions of godly sorrow, in Paul’s mind, the past had been “made as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18) because they had borne “fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8). The



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past had been made right and it was time to move on – not rehash it. Paul is expressing an attitude of exhilaration over the completion of **the matter**. When dehabitation and rehabilitation are well underway, there needs to be a “forgetting of that which lies behind” (cf. Phil. 3:13). The old **matter** that is now set straight is hardly worth mention. This is an appropriate fruit of true repentance.

V. SUMMARY ON REPENTANCE

Here are the eight characteristics that evidence genuine repentance. In recap of this passage notice the human element in all this, lest someone adopt a Keswick interpretation of how one changes (or is sanctified) with a “let go and let God” understanding of personal growth, One noteworthy commentator on the Corinthian Epistles states,

The descent into our own hearts, the painful self-scrutiny and self-condemnation, the sorrowing according to God, are not waste of moral force; they apply to the soul the pressure under which it manifests those potent virtues which St. Paul here ascribes to the Corinthians. All sorrow, indeed, as he is careful to tell us, is not repentance; but he who has no sorrow for his sin has not the force in him to produce [the characteristics above].

A worldly kind of self-centered sorrow over sin will not manifest these attitudes characteristic of true, genuine repentance. Furthermore such a response to sin is stagnating to one’s spiritual growth. Remember, the Greek word for repentance means, “a change of mind” whereas *lupe*, the Greek word for remorse means, “pain of body.” Repentance leads to dehabitation and rehabilitation, biblical thinking and actions, and a life of spiritual growth. An attitude of remorse over sin, on the other hand, is indicative of the “sorrow of the world [which] produces death” (2 Cor. 7:10).

Remorse heals not the soul; it makes it worse. This is illustrated by King David in Psalm 32:3-4. After failing to achieve a biblical form of repentance relative to his sin with Bathsheba he confessed,

When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.

One commentator states about the sorrow of the world, “Human sorrow is unsanctified remorse and has no redemptive capability. It is nothing more than the wounded pride of getting caught in a sin and having one’s lusts go unfulfilled. That kind of sorrow leads only to guilt, shame, despair, depression, self-pity and hopelessness.” Illustrative of this sorrow is Psalm 32:10,

Many are the sorrows of the wicked.

It is this wrong form of sorrow that one needs to discern: it is vastly different from true repentance. It is only true repentance germinating from a genuine saving faith in Christ with the accompanying Holy Spirit that can possibly create ensuing growth and change. May that be the case with you. Amen.

¹ Salvation is explicitly revealed in Scripture to be a gift to those who will by faith repent and receive Christ.

² Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). *Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary* (10th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

³ As stated, repentance is actually a gift from God, given along with the ability to believe in Christ. Importantly and additionally, this gift of repentance is ongoing in its operation—not only in salvation, but also in sanctification (throughout the life of the believer) as inferred by the Apostle in this passage under study.

⁴ Whenever Paul spoke of a good desire in the NT, (as he does 13 times) he uses this Greek word that is translated as **longing**. (Conversely when he speaks of a wrong, lustful desire he uses *epithymia*).