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# How to Effect Change and Growth in Your Life



**W**HAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO READ is not anything that you will find in typical, secular, pump-you-up, self-help seminars.

It has nothing to do with what personal growth gurus hawk in countless audio series, volumes of books, or in fiery seminars after they roll into town with much fanfare and bluster to teach you how to live in the moment, aim for the stars, and grow into your greatest and most powerful self.

What you are about to read has nothing to do with any of that. What follows is the biblical formula for growth, and it stands in dire and stark contrast to the world's notions of how to achieve that.

Unlike the idealistic commodities that are bought and sold today, the biblical formula for growth is not pleasant, nor is it ego-gratifying. It's hard work and it has everything to do with coming to the end of yourself and understanding the critical need for repentance and turning from sin.

Read on my friends,

Ralph Drollinger

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**Weekly Bible Studies**

**CABINET:** 7:00 AM Wednesdays, Location Undisclosed. *Light Refreshments Served.*

**SENATE:** 8:00 AM Tuesdays, Rotating Offices of Senators. *Hot Breakfast Served.*

**HOUSE:** 9-10 PM Tuesdays Capitol Hill Club, Main Dining Room. *Dessert Served.*



MINISTRY UPDATE

### Inoke Kubuabola, Recently-named CM Global Director, Plants Two Ministries in South Pacific Nations

INOKE KUBUABOLA, NAMED CAPITOL Ministries’ Global South Pacific Director in July 2017, has already launched two new discipleship ministries in the South Pacific Islands.

In September, Kubuabola established a weekly Bible study to Fiji Parliamentarians that is faithfully attended by seven Members and is growing. The studies are led by The Rev. Aporosa Rageci and The Rev. Isireli Kacimaiwai.

So enthusiastic are the Parliamentarians that they requested the Bible studies never be canceled, even if they are overburdened with business.

“It has been overwhelming the way God is quickening the ministry,” Kubuabola said. “We see the favor of God move amongst our Leaders and we believe this is the new season for our beloved nation of Fiji.”

A second ministry was planted in February 2018. Kubuabola met with Parliamentarian Dr. Allan Marat who has agreed to start Capitol Ministries to Members of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Parliament.

Born in 1954 and the only Papua New Guinean (and only Pacific Islander) to graduate with a Doctor of Law from Oxford University, Dr. Marat entered Papua New Guinea Parliament in 2003. He has served in past governments as Attorney General, Deputy Parliament Member and Acting Governor General. Dr. Marat was very excited to learn the Capitol Ministries’ mission to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to leaders in the political arena of the world and decided to begin a ministry in the PNG Parliament, Kubuabola said.

“We are grateful to God for raising up Inoke to this vital position,” said Ralph Drollinger, President and Founder of

*Continued on page 3*

### I. INTRODUCTION

THE BIBLE HAS MUCH to say about how a person can change; as a matter of fact, the Scriptures reveal that those who are in Christ will change for the better. But how exactly does this happen? Or better, how is the believer (to use the appropriate theological term) Sanctified? In addition to all the secular theories regarding achieving personal growth and change for the better, there are at least four major historical/theological views proffered in answer to this, but as you will see, only one of them has a solid biblical basis. Very briefly they are:

#### A. TOTAL PERFECTIONISM

The first is known as Christian Perfectionism, it stems from Charles Wesley, the historic English leader of the Methodist movement. Herein a supposed second work of Grace, post salvation, catapults the believer into a state of “sinlessness.” Another name for this flawed view is “entire Sanctification.” The believer may make mistakes, but supposedly he is no longer sinning. Spiritual growth is indicated by increasing good works. Simply put, in a real world sense, Wesleyan Perfectionism is problematic in that one only need ask the perfect person’s spouse if he or she is perfect. Practical reality suggests that total Sanctification/perfectionism is not achieved by any believer in this life, nor is such a view supported

by Scripture.

#### B. PASSIVE GROWTH

A second widely-held view of Sanctification is the Keswick (pronounced “Kezeek”) school of thinking. In this understanding the believer passively grows in his or her relationship to Christ. One need only “surrender” to grow spiritually. Just keep drinking in the Bible and you will mature. “Let go and let God” is an appropriate summary of this way of thinking. But as will be seen in what follows, God’s grace enables human responsibility in the Sanctification process and there is a biblical expectation for the enactment of human volition in the achievement of spiritual growth.

#### C. PENANCE AND REMORSE

This third position is commonly practiced in cults. It is known as penance. Whereas the previous two positions are practiced in error amongst those with a biblical Soteriology (that is a proper understanding of what the Bible teaches about true saving faith), penance is the idea of imposing something as a punishment for sin — it is a human attempt to balance the scales. In the world of penance-seekers, neither justification (one’s salvation) nor Sanctification (one’s spiritual growth) is imputed from God via His enablement (per the truths of 1John 1:9 and many other passages). Rather, one’s salvation and Sanctification are earned via self-efforts or



personal merit. In this way of thinking it follows that if one is saved by personal merit that he grows by personal merit. One is Sanctified by conducting offsetting good deeds, works or prayers in order to propitiate (satisfy) his wrong doings; one is “guilted” into changing. The problem is, likened to the former positions, there is no substantiation, biblical basis, for such a belief or practice.

#### D. PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

The forth position on Sanctification is the one that is supported by Scripture: Progressive Sanctification. The Bible repeatedly reveals that a lifelong cycle of *repentance* and renewal progresses one toward Christlikeness — and this process of growth will only be complete when one goes home to be with the Lord. There is no perfection this side of heaven. Growth and change are accomplished through the active participation and discipline of the believer whom the Holy Spirit prompts and energizes for the task. Philippians 2:12-13 and many other passages support this summation on Sanctification:

*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.*

Notice this passage closely. *Work*

*out* (the Greek word *katergazomai*) is not referring to salvation by works,<sup>2</sup> (cf. Romans 3:21-24; Ephesians 2:8, 9; John 1:12; Romans 10:9) but rather is descriptive of the responsibility that the believer need possess after being saved by God’s grace. And the fact that *it is God who is at work in you* evidences the causal agent (God) who engenders and empowers the *working out* of Sanctification in the life of the believer after being saved. Other passages that support the biblical teaching of Progressive Sanctification are Philippians 3:13,14; Romans 6:19; Acts 1:8; 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; and 2Peter 1:5-11. Each passage underscores Progressive Sanctification, wherein *God who is at work in you* is the one who prompts the believer, and his responsibility to *work* — taking personal responsibility — to achieve spiritual growth as God directs in his heart.

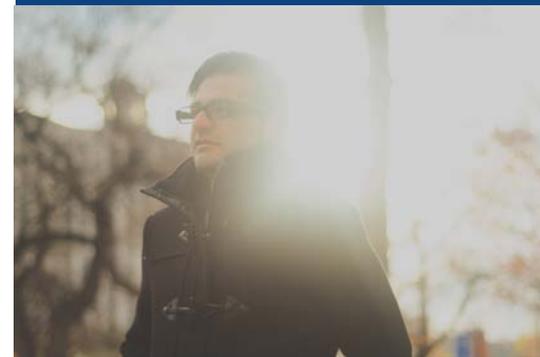
#### II. SCRIPTURAL BASICS RELATED TO SANCTIFICATION

The aforementioned listing of Bible passages are all worth noting and pondering before moving further along in the further development of this study (but are in accumulation, too lengthy to include in what I hope to be limited to a 12 page study on the matter). In summary, human responsibility — *working* at your Sanctification — is catalytic to change. But more specifically,

#### ♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

### Ephesians 4:22-24

*That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*



*In order to grow spiritually, the believer must put off the old self and put on the new self.*





Continued from page 2

Capitol Ministries. “Only a few months after being named South Pacific Director, he has made mind-numbing progress in furthering the Gospel of Jesus Christ among political leaders in his area of the world.”

Kubuabola is a proven leader who has held a number of high-ranking positions in the Fiji government. As CM’s Director, a self-supporting missionary position, he is tasked with planting discipleship Bible studies to the leaders of Fiji, the 16 surrounding independent island nations, as well as in the federal capitals of Australia and New Zealand.

To get the word out, he created a South Pacific Islands Capitol Ministries Facebook page and recruited a group of passionate volunteers to provide prayer and support.

Kubuabola also organized a luncheon where church leaders learned about Capitol Ministries’ mission and were invited to become partners in taking the Gospel to political leaders.

Working to plant additional discipleship ministries, Kubuabola is networking with fellow leaders in Vanuatu, Solomon, Tonga, Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Palau, and Niue and is establishing contacts in Australia and New Zealand. [cm](#)

how? What follows are the four fundamental scriptural basics related to Sanctification.

### A. ALL CHANGES SHOULD ALIGN WITH SCRIPTURE

Since the Bible is inspired by God, it is the basis of all truth. “He is there and He is not silent,” wrote Francis Schaeffer. In other words, God has revealed Himself to man not only in the advent of His Son Jesus Christ, but in His Holy Word. Scripture therefore need be the sole epistemological source (that is, the sole grounds for knowledge) as it relates to one’s faith, practice and changes. Notice Scripture’s internal testimony regarding itself as it relates to change:

*2Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.*

The Greek the construct of this important passage is best translated, “All Scripture is given by inspiration . . .”. Notice one of the specific purposes God *inspired* Scripture is for *proper teaching, reproof, correction and training*; all these words connote change that is informed and guided by scriptural truths. Add to this understanding the following:

*1Thessalonians 2:13 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.*

Scripture states of itself that it intends to *perform a work in you*, that is to change those who believe in it. Accordingly:

### SINCE THE BIBLE IS GOD’S WORD TO MAN THEN EVERY CHANGE ONE DESIRES TO MAKE SHOULD ALIGN WITH HIS ORDINANCES.

*Importantly and to the point in our outline, the Scriptures are the basis for achieving right changes. 2Corinthians 10:5 echoes and summarizes this first point when it says, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*

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

The second fundamental scriptural basic related to change can be gleaned from 1Thessalonians 5:14. Paul states, *We urge you, brethren, admonish [noutheteo] the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.* Change occurs when one is confronted by the truths of God. Change results, according to 1Corinthians 1:18, because God’s Word has power — power to change individuals when they are confronted by it:

*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.*

Isaiah 55:11 amplifies this same astounding truth:

*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.*

It follows that the Word of God is the conduit that one need utilize in counseling or mentoring (or better, *admonishing*) another to change. (Note that this is where the term *Nouthetic Counseling* comes from. This is a form of pastoral counseling that is totally Bible based and focused solely on Christ. It renounces conventional psychology and psychiatry as humanistic because so often they are opposed to biblical principles.) States Hebrews 4:12 in summary of the importance of the Word to create change, *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword . . .* Often, God uses other believers through their friendship or writings to amplify His Word in our lives. Look for this and be open to it. This is how God intends to create biblically based change in your life.

### C. THE REACTION TO SCRIPTURAL ADMONITION NEED BE REPENTANCE

Building from the first two points relative to scriptural basics related

to change is how one responds to being *admonished* by the Word of God. How you respond to being *admonished* by the Word of God is very important if you are to grow. Pivotal to this understanding is 2Timothy 2:25:

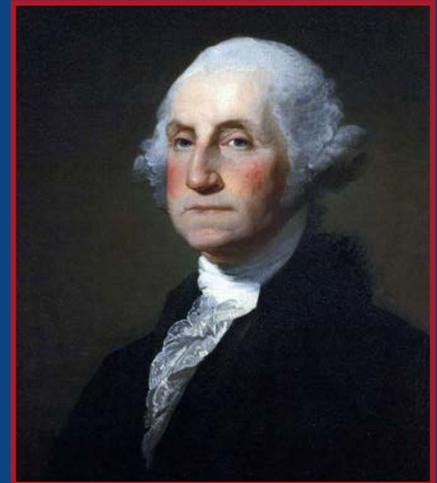
*. . . with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.*

The proper biblical response to the *admonitions* of the Word of God is not, “I don’t need to change, I am already perfect,” nor is it, “I’ll just let go and let God” nor is it, “I’ll balance the scales myself.” To the contrary of these aforementioned aberrant views of the Sanctification process, this passage reveals that *repentance* (*metanoia*) which means “a change of mind, direction and purpose” is the key to the believer’s growth process. Importantly, 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* is produced by God’s sovereign grace: *if perhaps God may grant . . .*

In other words, like the faith to believe in Christ (e.g. Ephesians 2:8-9):

**REPENTANCE, TOO, IS  
A GIFT FROM GOD! ONE  
WHO IS TRAPPED IN SIN  
AND DESIRES TO CHANGE  
SHOULD THEREFORE  
CRY OUT IN HUMILITY,  
“GOD HAVE MERCY ON ME  
AND GRANT ME THE**

George Washington



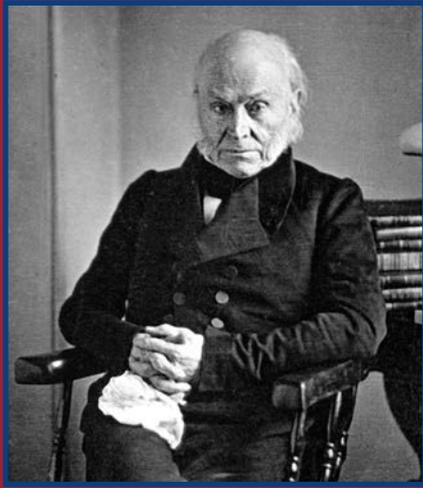
*“Direct my thoughts, words and work. Wash away my sins in the immaculate blood of the lamb, and purge my heart by thy Holy Spirit, from the dross of my natural corruption, that I may with more freedom of mind and liberty of will serve thee, the ever lasting God, in righteousness and holiness this day, and all the days of my life.”*

— George Washington, first President of the United States; Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army; member of the Continental Congress; President of the Constitutional Convention, ‘Father of His Country’; judge.

From William J. Johnson, George Washington, *The Christian* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1919).



John Quincy Adams



“My hopes of a future life are all founded upon the Gospel of Christ and I cannot cavil or quibble away [evade or object to]. . . . the whole tenor of His conduct by which He sometimes positively asserted and at others countenances [permits] His disciples in asserting that He was God.”

— John Quincy Adams, 6th U.S. President; Diplomat; Secretary of State; U.S. Senator; U.S. Representative.

John Adams and John Quincy Adams, *The Selected Writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, Adrienne Koch and William Peden, editors (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 292, John Quincy Adams to John Adams, January 3, 1817.

### GIFT OF REPENTANCE FROM MY SIN!

*Repentance* leads to lasting change; it is the key element in Progressive Sanctification! Underscoring this is Jeremiah 13:23. It states that any change apart from God-given *repentance* is futile:

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

Sinners in and of themselves cannot change the essence of their very nature is Jeremiah’s point. Therefore, the only way one can achieve lasting change is with God’s help, which is why crying out to Him in brokenness and contrition is the only way one can enact change for the better. If you are following me, in the development of this study, *How To Effect Change And Growth In Your Life* has much to do with understanding what exactly biblical *repentance* is — in great detail — since that is pivotal to attaining growth, or Sanctification in the here and now.

#### D. THE RECURRING PAULINE SOUNDBITE DESCRIBING CHANGE

In Paul’s letters to the Roman, Ephesian, and Colossian Churches he often speaks of spiritual growth: i.e. Sanctification or change in terms of “putting off” and “putting on.” He is saying that to grow spiritually, the believer must put off the old self

and put on the new self. Ephesians 4:22-24 best capsulizes this wherein Paul states:

*that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

Key to our study, relative to how the believer effectuates change in his life is the idea of *laying aside the old self*, or putting it off. And, synonymous with putting off or *laying aside* is the Greek word for *repentance*. It means to turn 180 degrees, to put something off, out of your life that is not pleasing to God.

It follows then that *repentance*, putting off, is an essential, key element for Christian growth. Given basics related to Sanctification, and what keys it, how can we best understand what is characteristic of true *repentance*? What follows may seem a bit “in the weeds” on this subject, but precisely and thoroughly understanding what the Bible means by *repentance* is of utmost importance since it effectuates spiritual growth! It is the starting point of spiritual growth! Accordingly, to fail at this point is to fail at growing spiritually.

#### WHAT ARE THE BIBLICAL INDICATORS OF REPENTANCE? WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE



## BETWEEN HUMAN SORROW AND TRUE REPENTANCE?

2Corinthians 7:9-11 is perhaps the best passage in the New Testament that carefully delineates the characteristics of genuine *repentance*. Let us now turn our attention as to how we can best understand that passage.

### III. THE CONTEXT OF THE INSTRUCTION ON TRUE REPENTANCE

What follows is 2Corinthians 7:9-11 which delineates, details, and defines the various components of true *repentance*:

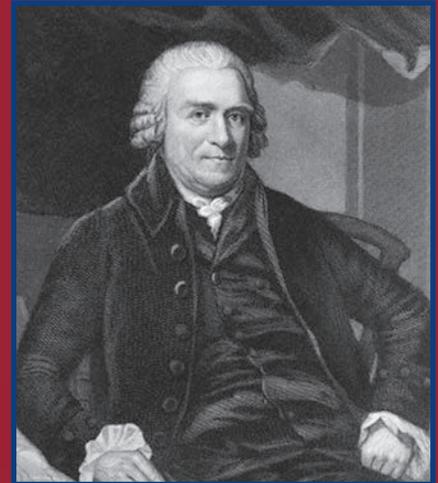
*I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance 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 personally establishing this church. Sometime after having planted this church he sent his emissary, Timothy, to Corinth (1Corinthians 4:17; 16:10,11). As a result of that, Paul found out that self-styled false apostles now inhabited the assembly, and in their *zeal* for power, they had castigated Paul and tried to persuade the congregation to no longer follow his teachings. When he learned of this mutinous news, Paul immediately departed (from Ephesus) to visit Corinth. To his deep chagrin, upon his arrival he soon tasted of the bitter fruit of the false teachers, experiencing the *disloyalty* of so many in the flock — a flock he had labored so hard to establish. Accordingly, and reactively, upon his return to Ephesus, he authored what is now commonly referred to as the “Severe Letter” (ref. 2Corinthians 2:4) sending it to Corinth via his beloved, loyal disciple, Titus.

Upon their eventual reconnection, Titus gave a surprisingly warm report to Paul as to the Corinthian church’s acceptance of Paul’s “Severe Letter.” Specifically, many had *repented* of their rebellion against the Apostle! Paul was overjoyed to learn of this (as per the text under study herein in 2Corinthians). It is in this broad context that the words of 2Corinthians chapter 7 need be understood: As a result of the mutiny and the congregation’s later *repentance* from their mutinous behavior, the Holy Spirit is affording to us *what connotes true repentance*

Samuel Adams



*“If men of wisdom and knowledge, of moderation and temperance, of patience, fortitude and perseverance, of sobriety and true republican simplicity of manners, of zeal for the honour of the Supreme Being and the welfare of the commonwealth; if men possessed of these other excellent qualities are chosen to fill the seats of government, we may expect that our affairs will rest on a solid and permanent foundation.”*

—Samuel Adams, signer of the Declaration of Independence; Father of the American Revolution; ratifier of the US Constitution; Governor of Massachusetts.

Samuel Adams, letter to Elbridge Gerry, November 27, 1780.



Thomas Stone



*“Shun all giddy, loose, and wicked company; they will corrupt and lead you into vice and bring you to ruin. Seek the company of sober, virtuous and good people . . . which will lead [you] to solid happiness.”*

— Thomas Stone, signer of the Declaration of Independence; selected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, lawyer, member of the committee that formed the Articles of Confederation in 1777; served as President of Congress in 1784.

John Sanderson, *Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence* (Philadelphia: R. W. Pomeroy, 1824), Vol. IX, p. 333, Thomas Stone to his son, October 1787.

*in the life of a believer.* Again, there is perhaps no better passage in the entire Bible than this one found in 2Corinthians 7:9-11 that unveils poignant insights that all followers of Christ need possess relative to the make-up of true *repentance*.

#### IV. EIGHT ASPECTS OF GENUINE REPENTANCE

True, genuine *repentance* and change, states Paul, is characterized by at least eight attitudes and related actions that are motivated by God’s Sanctifying presence in the life of the believer.<sup>3</sup> “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.”<sup>4</sup> These characteristics follow from the words used by Paul in the 2Corinthian passage.

##### A. EARNESTNESS (*Spoude*)

When a believer expresses *sorrow* in a godly manner, there will be a manifest sense of *earnestness* on his or her behalf to eagerly and assertively pursue a righteous course. There will be, as one commentator puts it, “speed involved in the carrying out of a matter . . . a willingness to do good will.”<sup>5</sup> Herein is the initial reaction of genuine *repentance* that is borne from above.

**THE FIRST EARMARK THEN, OF GENUINE REPENTANCE IS THAT GODLY SORROW; WHEN PRESENT, WHEN GIVEN BY GOD, WILL PRODUCE A SENSE OF EFFORT AND HURRY THAT**

##### IS SELF-MOTIVATED FROM WITHIN.

There is a resolution that becomes a reality — an internal motivation, an *earnestness* to “bear fruit in keeping with *repentance*” (Matthew 3:8).

##### B. VINDICATION (*Apologia*)

States the New International Commentary on the New Testament (*NICNT*) in regard to this specific characteristic of *vindication*, “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*, as one commentator puts it: “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.” There exists an *earnestness* to outwardly rectify, to *vindicate* that which the sin caused. Conversely:

**THE FALSELY REPENTANT ARE CHARACTERIZED BY AN ATTITUDE THAT REMAINS STAYED ON SELF — FAR MORE CONCERN ABOUT DAMAGE TO PERSONAL IMAGE THAN PROMPTNESS TO REMEDY**

This unrepentant person remains hung-up on himself, and the ramifications to self that stem from



his actions: his reputation and his standing amongst peers remains more important. True *repentance* is always characterized by a God-given *desire* to immediately *vindicate* a *matter*, seeking out others whom they have offended, asking for their forgiveness, and thereby exonerate the wrong done. Put another way, to the genuinely *repentant*, outward self-preservation is less important than God-glorification. When an unction to *vindicate* is missing a person is really not *repentant*.

### C. INDIGNATION (*Aganaktesis*)

This same Greek word translated here into English as *indignation*, as used elsewhere in several other gospel narrative and carries the idea of being angered by one's own wrongful actions. 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 anger "because of the scandal he had permitted to continue unchecked in the church and the consequent affront to the holy name of God." Herein is another clear indication of genuine *repentance*: the believer will possess an internal hatred and anger over his sin and a discontentment relative to the *indignity* it has brought on the Lord's name and His church. In actuality, 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 believer's heart

— a self-hatred that can only find its release through total rectification with offended parties.

### D. FEAR (*Phobos*)

In addition to their internal compunction, the wayward Corinthian believers *feared* the apostolic authority of the one to whom they had been disloyal. They *feared* that he could seek retribution for their sinful ways, in fact, *with a rod* (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:21). A manifest characteristic of true *repentance* means there will be a healthy *fear* not only of God, but of those the sin has wronged.

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 SELF-INDIGNATION.  
AND ALSO PRESENT IS  
FEAR OF THE RETRIBUTIVE  
JUDGMENT OF A HOLY AND  
RIGHTEOUS GOD.**

### E. LONGING (*Zelos*)

*Zelos* is the Greek word we derive the English word jealousy from. At its root it means "a strong *desire*." In the context of this passage it means a *yearning* or strong *desire* to restore a relationship with someone whom one has sinned against. Akin to No. 2 (the *vindication* of self which has in mind the forensic, outward detail given to

The Capitol under construction 1846.



Congress, 1854:

"The great, vital, and conservative element in our system is the belief of our people in the pure doctrines and the divine truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

— Journal of the House of the Representatives of the United States of America (Washington, DC: Cornelius Wendell, 1855), 34th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 354, January 23, 1856; see also: Lorenzo D. Johnson, Chaplains of the General Government With Objections to their Employment Considered (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., 1856), p. 35, quoting from the House Journal, Wednesday, January 23, 1856, and B. F. Morris, The Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1864), p. 328.





Noah Webster



*“The virtues of men are of more consequence to society than their abilities; and for this reason, the heart should be cultivated with more assiduity than the head.”*

— Noah Webster, revolutionary soldier; judge; legislator; educator; “Schoolmaster to America.”

Noah Webster, *On the Education of Youth in America*, 1788.

clearing up the *matter* and situation), the *longing* mentioned here relates more to a vehement *desire* stemming from an internal aspiration of the heart.<sup>6</sup> The Corinthian believers, in their genuine *repentance*, manifested an internal *zeal* to honor Paul and his apostolic authority. In addition, they strongly *desired* to repudiate the false intruders in the church. More deeply, 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.”<sup>7</sup>

The genuinely *repentant* will always *yearn* and *long* for right relationships with other people. In Romans 12:18 Paul summarily embodies the aforementioned characteristics when he states, *If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*

### F. ZEAL (*Epipithesis*)

Another attitude that is consistent with true *repentance* is the *zeal* that the Corinthian believers possessed to take up Paul’s defense and stand against the false teachers who had taken over the Corinthian Church. 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 sobering, accepting and realizing that they had been disloyal to the Apostle. They adopted Paul’s view toward the false teachers; they took up Paul’s cause as their own! God-enabled genuine *repentance* produces this kind of *zeal* to do an about-face on a *matter*. 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 adopting the contrary opinion regarding an offense. They are characterized by not admitting to any wrongdoing and continue to blame the other party.

### G. AVENGING OF WRONG (*Ekdikesis*)

Perhaps the strongest indication of true *repentance* is the one that is hardest to perform by means other than God-given. In God-empowered *repentance*, the sinner thinks not of protecting him or herself. 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 Paul was referring in our home passage 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 lead in the church does not matter relative to this study. In both cases, the now-humble Corinthian believers had a *desire* to seek reconciliation! The all-consuming objective was to put their house in order no matter what the cost. When this is one’s



attitude, then spiritual growth is in view:

**SUCH AN ATTITUDE IS INDICATIVE OF AN EARNEST DESIRE TO NEVER DO THAT AGAIN — AND THEREIN IS SPIRITUAL GROWTH — PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION IS ACHIEVED**

#### H. INNOCENT IN THE MATTER (*Hagnos*)

The last characterizing word that Paul chooses to express what, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, typifies true *repentance* is the Corinthians' *innocence* relative to their past sin. The Greek word here for *innocent* 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 carried here is that if a procedure is followed, then purity results. And that is exactly why Paul chooses this word last on his list of identifying characteristics. Paul's word choice displays a beautiful, human illustration of the theology behind 1 John 1:9, which states:

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

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 and by this insightful passage. Important also to note is that Paul doesn't rehearse the 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). In Philippians we learn that Paul practiced *forgetting what lies behind* (Philippians 3:13). Since the past had been made right and it was time to move on — not relive it. Paul is expressing an attitude of exhilaration over the completion of *the matter*. This passage then is a beautiful narrative of the achievement of spiritual growth:

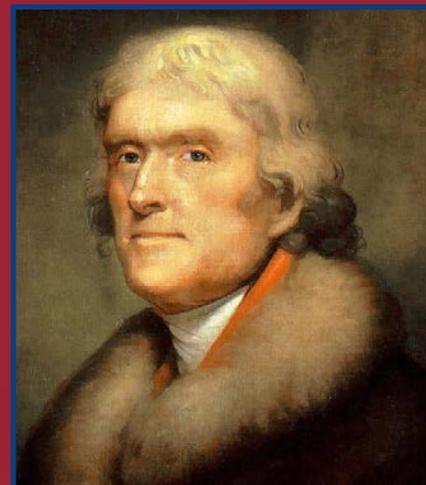
**INDICATIVE OF REAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS THIS: WHEN DEHABITUATION AND REHABITUATION HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED**

#### V. SUMMARY

These eight characteristics of genuine *repentance* are basic to spiritual growth — correctly and completely turning away from the past and moving toward what is right in the future. Putting off and putting on, dehabituating and rehabilitating.

A worldly kind of self-centered *sorrow* over sin will manifest few if any of these attitudes characteristic of true, genuine *repentance*. Furthermore, such a response to sin — hold-

Thomas Jefferson



*"The practice of morality being necessary for the wellbeing of society, He [God] has taken care to impress its precepts so indelibly on our hearts that they shall not be effaced by the subtleties of our brain. We all agree in the obligation of the moral principles of Jesus and nowhere will they be found delivered in greater purity than in His discourses."*

— Thomas Jefferson, signer of the Declaration of Independence; diplomat; Governor of Virginia; Secretary of State; third President of the United States.

Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Albert Ellery Bergh, editor (Washington D.C.: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904), Vol. XII, p. 315, to James Fishback, September 27, 1809.



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ing on to it — is stagnating to one's spiritual growth. Remember the Greek word for *repentance* means, "a change of mind" whereas *lupe*, the Greek word for *worldly sorrow* means, "pain of body." *Repentance* is the fundamental key to a life of change and growth. As such, one matures in his Christian life through genuine *repentance*. So then, as God places things on your heart that need to change, pay close attention! Turn from them in *earnestness* and put them behind you forever as you put off and put on, and move on toward Sanctification in Christ! Amen! **cm**

<sup>1</sup>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.*"

<sup>2</sup>Since salvation is explicitly revealed in Scripture to be a gift to those who will by faith repent and receive Jesus Christ as Lord.

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

<sup>4</sup>*The Expositors Bible, Second Corinthians.*

<sup>5</sup>*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDONTT).*

<sup>6</sup>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*).

<sup>7</sup>(*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pg. 106).

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