

Did You Repent?

Joe Slater

Feature it if you can: the prison warden having a couple of maximum-security inmates at his home for an early breakfast! What a difference Jesus makes! Here's what happened:

Before hearing the gospel, the jailer in Philippi had been cruel and rough. Despite Paul and Silas' wretched physical condition from their beating, he mercilessly confined them in the hot, dark, filthy inner prison, adding to their misery by fastening their feet in the stocks (Acts 16:24). Only a few hours later, though, having heard the gospel, the jailer demonstrated the fruit of repentance (see Matthew 3:8). He *"took them the same hour or the night and washed their stripes"* (Acts 16:33). After being baptized, he brought Paul and Silas *"into his house"* and *"set food before them"* (v. 34). Repentance? Yes!

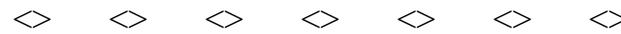
Did you repent? What fruit has repentance produced in your life? By definition, repentance is a change of mind. If the change of mind is real, it will result in a change of behavior. Merely saying, "I'm sorry" is not repentance. In fact, to say, "I'm sorry," but continue to behave the same way, is hypocrisy! "For godly sorrow produces repentance . . . but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Equally vain is saying, "I can't help it, that's just the way I am!" Suppose the jailer had offered that excuse. "I'm sorry, Paul and Silas! I know it's wrong, but you'll just have to go back to the inner prison and let me re-fasten the stocks. I know your backs are raw and bleeding, but being harsh and cruel is just the way I am. I can't help it."

Every one of us would respond: "Oh, yes, Mr. Jailer, you can help it! The Lord will help you change your attitude and your behavior. If you are really sorry, you will change." And we would be right to say this; so, can we not see that the same truth applies to us?

Repentance does not mean we will be 100% successful immediately, or that we will never again yield to temptation. But whether we relapse once or a hundred times, we keep renewing our determination, and we keep changing our mind and our behavior back to what God wants.

If the Philippian jailer can change, so can you!



How Do You Measure Up?

"My God shall be My strength: Indeed, He says, 'Is it too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel? I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth'" (Isaiah 49:5, 6).

These words were spoken by the Father to Christ. Christians are the completion of the trust committed to our Lord. He has said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel . . ."

Are we being that light to the Gentiles . . . ?

--via *The Voice Of Truth International*

My Balancing Act

"Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2 NAU)

Watching a gymnast on the balance beam makes me nervous. I get so tense knowing that she may lose her balance through a very small movement. One little move and the result is devastating! How many times we've seen a great gymnast cry bitterly because she lost her balance.

Author and preacher Gary Demarest wrote: "There's a dangerous tendency in orthodox circles to focus on doctrine to the detriment of duty. Doctrinal conflict that neglects the duty to love one another becomes destructive of Christian community. At the same time, there's another danger in emphasizing behavior at the expense of doctrine. It can never be a case of either/or - it must be both/and."

When the study of God's word becomes purely academic, everyone loses. Teacher and student seek knowledge for knowledge's sake. Such lifeless study is like breathing air into a corpse. Nothing happens. On the other hand, when God's word is valued as water to a thirsty soul, and as food to a starving man then wonderful things happen to the soul. That's why it is called "the living word."

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)