
Words of Truth

You Can Change

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Guilt. We see it in the Scriptures from the first time that sin entered into this world (Genesis 3:7-10). When Job realized he had spoken foolishly about God, he said these things: *"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further... I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 40:4-5 and Job 42:5-6).

Guilt is that time when your insides are troubled, your heart is turned, and you are in mental distress (Lamentations 1:20). Some people take guilt and make excuses (Romans 2:15). Others, of an honest heart, will take guilt and want to change the wrongs they have done (Acts 2:36-41).

Some of us know these things first hand. I know that I have sinned, willfully, in the distant past. I know that I was stupid. I know the burn of guilt. I also know the dishonesty of excusing oneself. When I was a teenage boy I obeyed the Gospel. I desired only to do the will of my Father in Heaven for I had lived a life in disobedience to Him before my conversion. The family I lived with proclaimed to be Christians. Yet, there was hypocrisy in their lives. On top of that, they constantly looked at me and thought I was doing things wrong when I really wasn't. I took those two things and turned against my Lord. I excused myself by saying, "if they are going to accuse me of things I am not doing, I might as well just go ahead and do them." I was wrong. It was not God's fault that I was part of an unsupportive, hypocritical family. It took me a while, but I realized I needed to repent of those sins. Thanks be to God that He is a forgiving God.

Have you been like I was at some point? Are you there now to some degree? Have you made excuses? Have you cast blame on others for your transgressions? Have you been a faker to hide your true self from others? Listen, you can change!

Repentance IS Possible

We know that we have the choice to repent of sin or perish (Luke 13:3; 5). The Parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son show us that God greatly desires to see every one of us who goes astray to come back to Him (Luke 15:1-32). Just as we chose to sin (Ezekiel 18:20-28, Daniel 9:5, and James 1:13-16), we have to choose to repent (Acts 26:20).

If you are in sin, you cannot think that you have gone too far to turn back. If you have been a fraud that does not mean you cannot turn that around. Think about Peter for example. Peter opened his mouth before he considered his words. He thought that he could prevent Jesus from dying on the

cross without considering, as he had been told, that such was the whole purpose for Jesus coming into the world (Matthew 16:21-22). Jesus responded to Peter by saying: "...Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:23). Peter was told, by Jesus, that he would forsake our Lord and deny our Lord three times (Matthew 26:31-34). Peter vehemently denied what Jesus promised was to happen (Matthew 26:35). Later, Peter did just as Jesus foretold (Matthew 26:69-75). There were many compounding sins in what Peter did. Yet, Peter changed. He was there to be a big part of the first sermon recorded after Jesus ascended into Heaven (Acts 2:14-41). Peter [Cephas] became a pillar in the Lord's body (Galatians 2:9). Even after these things, he erred again in being a respecter of persons. He had to be corrected for that transgression (Galatians 2:11-17). Yet, he corrected himself and went on to be a qualified elder in the Lord's body (I Peter 5:1-4; cf. I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9). Peter changed!

Saul (a.k.a. the Apostle Paul; Acts 13:9) killed Christians (Acts 9:1 and Acts 22:1-4). He "wasted" the Lord's church (Galatians 1:13). Yet, he went on to be a faithful Apostle and preacher of the Gospel. He turned his life around to gain a reward for his labor (II Timothy 4:6-8). Many, throughout the Scriptures, erred grievously and repented of those transgressions. David was a murderer and fornicator (II Samuel 11:1-12:14), but repented of those transgressions (II Samuel 12:15-25). David is listed as an example of faithfulness in the Scriptures (Hebrews 11:32). It was through his seed that Christ came into the world (Romans 1:3). Paul and David changed!

Manasseh practiced idolatry (II Chronicles 33:1-5). Manasseh offered children up as sacrifices to false gods (II Chronicles 33:6). Manasseh polluted the Lord's house (II Chronicles 33:7-8). Manasseh caused Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err from the Lord (II Chronicles 33:9). When the Lord spoke to Manasseh, he would not listen (II Chronicles 33:10). Yet, after correction (II Chronicles 33:11), Manasseh humbled himself greatly before God and turned these things around (II Chronicles 33:12-16). All of these men repented! So can you, for our God is a forgiving God.

Our Father Is Willing To Forgive

Our Lord is merciful and forgiving (Exodus 34:6-7). We can acknowledge and confess our sins to God for forgiveness (Psalms 32:5). We can turn our lives back to Him (Ezekiel 14:6). God will remove your transgressions from you (Psalms 103:12). He is willing to FORGET our sins (Hebrews 10:17-18). When we are forgiven of our sins, when we are washed from our sins; we are then as though we had never sinned at all. In other words, we are cleansed from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). That is comforting. That is wonderful. Why, if you are in sin, would you not take advantage of these facts? Why, if you are in sin, would you choose to stay in such a state when you can be forgiven of those transgressions? If you are in sin, why would you lose your soul when you don't have to (Ezekiel 18:31)?

Conclusion

If you are in sin, there is no excuse to stay there. You can choose to be like Judas and go hang yourself (Matthew 27:3-5). You can be like Ananias and Sapphira by dying in your sins (Acts 5:1-10). Or, you can be like the great men we've discussed in this article and turn back to God. If need be, YOU CAN CHANGE!