

## School of Revival - Topic Two

### Turn to Me

There is an old saying that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step just as the laying of the first brick in the wall serves as the first foundation of a house. Revivals always begin with the individual; they start with us. We cannot revive others unless we are first revived.

Just as the passage says – *Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord* - Acts 3:19, we must first repent before anything else happens. Jesus also heralded the kingdom by pronouncing the need and urgency for repentance before He set in motion His revival ministry - *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* – Matthew 4:17. Repentance begins the initial stage. It has been well documented that all genuine revivals in the past are initiated by genuine repentance. Repentance is part of unearthing all the elements of the flesh and the world from our wells.

Repentance is not necessarily asking for forgiveness for our wrongdoings or transgressions, but biblical repentance is acknowledging that we are finite beings with a sinful nature that is inclined to enmity against God - *For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God* – Romans 8:6-8. Carnality is the very nature of our humanity; it is the genetic inheritance passed on through the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden (Romans 5:12-14).

Repentance or *metanoia* in Greek is to simply think differently or to have a renewed mind, a change of mind that leads to a change of heart that leads to a change of life. *Metanoia* changes our direction in life and our desires and priorities. The terminology of the word ‘*metanoia*’ is to turn a new direction, it has a military essence in its usage in the Roman era where soldiers marching toward a certain direction are ordered to stop, turn abruptly, and immediately march toward a new or different direction.

In our context, it means we are to halt and stop thinking the way we used to think like the world or like some superficial Christians who still compromise with worldly indulgence, stop living a life that contradicts the word and will of God; and turn a new, different direction by thinking anew with a renewed mind, and turning back to God.

Revivals ignited as the result of repentance will change our worldview to a biblical view where we think and see things from a heavenly and eternal perspective rather than from a shallow and narrow earthly temporal perspective. This will awaken new spiritual desires and attitudes toward God and His agendas. A *metanoia* repentance or change of mind delivers us from a carnal mind that is arguably hostile toward God (in terms of trust, faith, and submission – 2 Corinthians 10:5) and transforms our mind into the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

A genuine repentance is both a denunciation (verbal) and renunciation (actions) of our past, of everything associated with our morals and faith that are not aligned with God's word and will. That was the reason that Paul wrote - *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God* – Romans 12:1-2.

The passage begins with a strong admonition to present our lives as holy, living sacrifices that could only be realized by living life differently from how we used to live. It involves renouncing the conforming (imitating and associating) to the system of the world and its philosophies. Then, a transformation (taking a new form) process will take place due to the initiation of a mind being renewed.

The word “renewing” here in Greek is *anakainosis* which literally means renovation. Renovation in its simplest terms means the act of improving by renewing and restoring to its former good condition or to a better enlarged and beautified new condition. Renovation often requires tearing down or uprooting and replacing what is old or hindering, and enlarging, renewing, and replacing them with what is desirable and good. By doing so, we will now experience the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God which includes the full infusion of Christ that brings revivals.

Paul amplified this statement in another epistle - *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

*But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness* – Ephesians 4:17-24.

Let us examine some key phrases in this profound passage:

- No longer walk in the futility of the mind (fruitless, and careless living)
- Understanding is darkened and hearts blinded (due to ignorance and idolatry)
- Not learned Christ (untaught about the fulness of Christ)
- Put off former conduct, the old man (nature) that grows corrupt.

All the above share a common thread, that is to repent and turn away from futile thinking and worldly living and renouncing the old sinful conduct. Then, we are to be renewed (*ananeoo* in Greek in the combination of *metanoia* and *anakainosis* together) in the spirit of the mind, and to put on the new man in true righteousness and holiness. The word “put on” in

Greek is *enduo* which literally means to be clothed. Hence, repentance entails removing the old garment of self and being clothed with a new garment of identity and robe of righteousness.

Another common quotation for repentant prayers is taken from 2 Chronicles 7:14 - *if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

Let us examine some of the phrases here:

- God's people to humble themselves (bow low in humility and submission).
- pray and seek God's face (seek His ways and favor).
- turn from our wicked (ungodly) ways.

When we humble ourselves, humility is related to genuine repentance, praying (intercede), seeking the face of God (intimate relational encounters with God), and turning from our ungodly or worldly manners (which should precede the rest of the passage), God will hear (answer), forgive and heal (restore) the land (our environment and situation). I want to zoom in on the word, 'turn' which is *shuwb*, the Hebrew equivalent to the Greek *metanoia*. When we turn or repent, we will see personal and environmental transformation which is one of the many fruits of revival.

Another kind of repentance is the repentance for a transgression where we trespass or violate the boundary of the law of God. It is the repentance for sins and disobedience where we are remorseful for our wrong actions (the Greek here is *metamelomai*). This aligns with the passage in 1 John 1:8-9 - *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* This repentance prayer is confessing our wrongdoings or unrighteous attitudes and motives so that God can both forgive and heal us.

There are times when the Holy Spirit will initiate *identificational* repentance where we stand in the gap (in proxy) for someone who has committed spiritual trespasses or for a situation that has invoked a breach in the wall, allowing demonic influence to infiltrate and creep in.

Identification repentance is normally done for a nation, a government, a city, or a people group that has transgressed or turned away from God, and to revoke a curse and invoke God's blessing. That is why God says He will forgive and heal the land in the 2 Chronicles 7:14 prayer. God will cleanse the iniquities and idolatries; restore the spiritual, moral, political, and economy of the land where God will reside and preside over so that His kingdom would be established in the land. That is the climax of revivals.