

"REPENTANCE WHEN IN TEMPTATION" "EQUALS VICTORY IN JESUS"

The First-Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia

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(Hebr. 13:5-6) "Let your conversation be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So, we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

To covet something is to desire what is in someone else's possession. However, to covet something we want to have, has no part in God's 'plan of trust' on Him, for believers who want to progress in a life of faith (and "growth in holiness apart from which no one will see the Lord)." Coveting is something that one needs to be repentant of, to open the way for them to receive from God, and to "GET THINGS IN GOD'S WAY" (within His 'plan of trust').

A person new in the Truth would have a natural inclination to tell someone else what they need, instead of telling God in a private, personal prayer. That is because the human heart in its natural state, will always be tempted to covet things it wants to have. It is the 'self-life' that is still in a person's heart that tempts us to covet unnecessary things (or to covet something that we do need). For instance, if we needed money and we knew of someone who had plenty, we would like to get hold of some of it for us to meet the financial difficulty that we face. To fall to that temptation of telling someone else what we need (or to even hint that we are in a hard place and that we need something), would be sin, because the Bible says, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have." We must trust God to enable us to resist that temptation to fall into sin of coveting things that we need or want. Also, to have a repentant spirit in our heart about those times when we had given in to Satan, and we had fallen to that temptation. Then we can have 'victory in Jesus' by 'GETTING SOMETHING IN GOD'S WAY'!)

(MP) "Receiving victory in temptation according to God's 'plan of trust', has God's blessing in this life, and, of more significance, for us to 'GET SOMETHING IN GOD'S WAY' is a big forward step in our spiritual growth and preparation for Eternal Life." What could possibly be more important to us than our own eternal interests, (and God makes it easy for us to get all things within His 'plan of trust'). However, the 'pride of self' in our heart will hinder us from receiving things through God's plan of trust (just as it had hindered the prophet Jonah). That is the lesson God had to teach Jonah (and He has to teach us that same lesson, by allowing us to be

tempted, to expose the sinful nature of our heart), and which we must trust God to remove, if we want to inherit Eternal Life.

Scripture assures us that temptations we face do not come from God, but that He permits them to come about to teach us spiritual lessons of faith and trust on Him. (James 1:13-15) "Let no one say when passing through trial, "My temptation is from God;" for God is incapable of being tempted to do evil, and He Himself tempts no one. But when a man is tempted, it is his own passions that carry him away and serve as a bait. Then the passion conceives, and becomes the parent of sin; and sin, when fully matured, gives birth to death."

That tells us with no uncertainty that the 'self-nature' still in our heart is the sin that brought on the trial we are going through. (Vs.16) "Do not be deceived, my dearly-loved brethren" (in other words you must trust God to remove sin of self) because "sin, when fully matured gives birth to death." (The opposite case and solution is, repentance in temptation equals 'victory in Christ')."

(James 1:12) "Blessed is he who patiently endures trials; for when he has stood the test, he will gain the victor's crown—even the crown of Life—which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (John 14:15), Jesus reminded the Jews, "If you love me, you will obey my commandments."

We are called to endure temptations and tests of our faithful obedience to the words spoken by God, and written in Scripture for us to follow, just as Jonah had to be tested by God to remove pride of self from his heart, which hindered him from obeying God's Word, (and to teach him faithful obedience when God spoke to him). Jonah had to learn to see things from God's standpoint of faith on His spoken Word, and that is why we have temptation to meet to prove our faithful obedience to God's Word.

We are given God's 'plan of trust' (Phil.4:6) "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;" (which would include our sincere daily request for God to remove 'self' from our heart. However, 'self-life' in our heart wants us to get things in our own way, rather, than to take a chance on being ridiculed for trusting God to receive from Him. (That was the pride problem that kept Jonah from obeying God's plan until he repented, because it was a 'willful sin' on Jonah's part to turn aside from God's directive for him, and to follow the inclination of 'self' in his heart).

When we turn aside from God's plan of trust (laid out for us in His Word), that is 'willful sin' on our part. We may get something we want in our own way,... but the spiritual growth' that we forfeit by doing that, is of greater loss than we could even imagine, because it effectively hinders our 'eternal interests'. (Hebr.12:14) "Persistently strive for peace with all men, and... for that 'growth in holiness' apart from which no one will see the Lord."

God in His great mercy will also give us opportunity to repent of willful sin, just as He preserved Jonah's life and gave him that opportunity. He was willing to repent when God gave him opportunity, and he responded to God's convicting work by saying that God had shown him that "they that observe lying vanities" (that means who listens to the devil's lies)... "forsake their own mercy."

God did not give us the command "Let your conversation be without covetousness;" so that we might always be in a hard place financially. Rather, that when our every human dependance is out of the way, then God (with all His wealth of money) will take the place of our 'human places of dependance'. When we stop willfully sinning, by telling or hinting to others that we have a need, there will no longer be any difficulty in having our every need fully supplied.

The late Pastor referred to willful sin that is prevalent in multitudes of 'religious organizations', where their workers spend much of their time trying to get money out of those who have money. They do not merely hint that they need money (and would like to have it given to them), but they almost demand it. That is sin against God as if they stole the money,... for disobedience of one command of God, is as serious as disobeying any other of His commands.

Jonah is an example for us, of someone who got into trouble through willful sin (and he was in worse trouble than we have been). He was in a place where he had no Bible to help him, and he could not beg, borrow, nor steal to help his situation; (a worse place than Israel in the wilderness). He was lying helpless in the stomach of a large fish, because he had refused to go to Nineveh and preach God's sermon of just eight words, "yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." (Jonah 3:4).

When Jonah first received that Word from God to bring His message to Nineveh, the devil knew that the people in that city would repent, so he deceived Jonah and hindered him from going there. The devil told Jonah that if he went there and said that to those people, that they would repent and be delivered, and people would then say that Jonah was a false prophet.

Jonah listened to the devil's lies (just as he tempts us to listen to his lies instead of believing the promises of God). It seems that Jonah began to question himself, "should I really go to Nineveh and chance losing my reputation? I could not stand to have people call me a 'false prophet',... or, maybe my guidance is wrong in the first place."

Jonah should not have questioned the guidance, because (it says Jonah 1:1) "the word of the Lord came to Jonah", and "saying (vs.2), "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." He should not have questioned God's spoken Word, just as we should not question God's inspired written Word for us to follow in our life.

The Bible says that Jonah fled "from the presence of the Lord" and he boarded a ship bound for Tarshish. "But the Lord sent out a

great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up." (Jonah:4). Jonah was quick to acknowledge what brought on the trouble, and he told the crew that their only hope of survival was to throw him overboard. "And he said to them, (vs.12) "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

In reality, Jonah was saying that he would rather die than lose his reputation as a prophet, which was a clear indication of 'self' and pride in his heart. He would rather commit suicide than admit to his 'willful sin' of rebelling against God's Word.

We should take notice how merciful God was toward someone who willingly sinned against Him (and even more-so to realize how mercifully He deals with us in the best way that He can, to save us from our stubbornness and disobedience). God dealt lovingly with Jonah to preserve his life in a raging sea (Jonah 1:17) "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. (2:1-2) "Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. And he said: "I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of hell (Sheol) I cried, And You heard my voice."

Jonah had sinned against spiritual 'light' that he had received from God, turned his back on God; and did just opposite than what God intended for him to do; he hindered God's purpose concerning one hundred and twenty thousand people at Nineveh. (If we knew of someone who did that, we might say that they deserved whatever trouble would come upon them). Jonah no doubt thought "I am going to die now" (and a 'self-nature' in his heart told him, 'but you saved your reputation'). He was willing to commit suicide rather than to trust God to take him through that temptation of doubt from the devil, (and for God to also save his reputation).

We need to realize that when we do something for Scriptural reasons, God will protect our interest and He will control the other people involved. With God in control, there won't have to be any hard feelings, resentment, or loss of reputation (as the devil always tries to picture to our mind). Most people of the world would rather die trusting on the doctors ('be a dead fool' the Pastor said), rather than to trust on God and be a live Christian.

Jonah was in the fish's belly for three days waiting to die, but instead of dying he became stronger. Do we have the same God today? (we should ask ourselves). And the answer is, we have a wonderful God, whose mercy, meekness, and lowliness is the best part of His personality, and He offers Himself to us in all His long-suffering and gentleness.

God tells us to forgive seventy times seven times, and He will forgive us seventeen hundred times if needs be. That is the kind of God we have, and His mercy (Psalm 103:17) is from "everlasting to everlasting". (vs.11) "For as the heavens are high above the earth,

So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;" (To fear God is to love and obey Him).

After three days Jonah began to deal personally with God in prayer "And he said;" (Jonah 2:2-7) "I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' The waters surrounded me even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet 'You' have brought up my life from the pit, O 'Lord', my 'God'. "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple."

Jonah sincerely repented of his rebellious heart attitude (as we also must sincerely repent to receive our victory in Christ). Jonah confessed what he had learned from God dealing with him (Vs 8-9) "Those who regard worthless idols" (means, observe lying vanities, or who listen to the devil's lies),.. "Forsake their own Mercy. (He realized that listening to the devil's lies was the cause for his trouble). "But I will sacrifice to You, With the voice of thanks-giving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."

Jonah repented and learned how to pray, in order to receive instant deliverance from the great trouble he was in (because of his stubborn rebellion against the Word of God). He repented much like Job did, after his 'outwardly religious' life had landed him on an ash-heap with his body covered with boils. God permitted that to come upon Job to bring him to confession and repentance (in order to save his soul from eternal destruction).

Thus, Jonah turned back to God and prayed to Him out of the belly of the fish. (Talk about going into your room, shutting the door, and praying privately to God, with all human 'plans of deliverance' laid aside final. (There are wonderful deliverance(s) over the power of Satan, when people look to and depend on God alone). There was not anybody else for Jonah to turn to for help, (and it would not do much good to tell his troubles to the fish).

David was in a similar terrible condition (physically weakened and spiritually discouraged), and nobody to help him or to encourage him, but that is when he started to deal with God personally. (Psalm 34:) tells about God answering David's prayer. (It is a good thing when there is no one else but God to tell our troubles, because it will make us flee to God). (vs.4) "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears." (vs.6-7) "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And (He) delivers them."

(Jonah testified) "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice." Thanks to God for His mercy and love to save a soul (for both Jonah and David). With God we are always given an opportunity to repent and turn back to Him. They both learned (from dealing personally with God in prayer), that, there is no place from which God cannot deliver us, if we let Him.

Their testimonies should give us spiritual strength. While we are looking at our experiences, our difficulties, feelings, and troubles, we become filled with doubt and despair. But thanks to God's mercy, love, and unfailing divine power, no matter what terrible predicament we may seem to be in, ... it just takes one sincere look toward God to change things immediately for us.

Jonah (like the widow at Zarephath) had to learn that looking at seen circumstances, and listening to the devil's lies was the cause of the trouble he was in. By saying "Those who observe lying vanities forsake their own Mercy", he was admitting, "Lord, I see the cause of my trouble is that I have listened to the devil's lies, and I was deceived to do what he told me to do. God in His mercy had dealt with Jonah. However, when he looked to the Lord and turned to Him in personal, private prayer, he testified in a repentant spirit, "But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."

Praise God for any person who will repent and trust God for victory and will praise and glorify Him in faith that they are delivered. Some people are deceived to think that things will get better by worrying, (but sadly, they are greatly mistaken). The real fact is it gets better by praising and glorifying God. Jonah's faith became stronger each time he praised God for deliverance, for he said, "I will pay that, that I have vowed."

He meant, I now know that rebellion from the 'pride of self' in me, was the cause of my trouble. But now I am going to trust You for victory, praise You for everything You have ever done for me, and I thank You now for the victory out of my trouble. I make a vow to live up to my surrender of 'self-will' in my heart and go through with You no matter what comes. Salvation is of the Lord!

As He promised us in His Word, God was at Jonah's side in that fish, as He is at our side at all times, and just as willing to help us as He was in the belly of that fish to help Jonah. After Jonah repented, confessed his sin to God, and vowed to re-surrender his life to do God's will, God just had to speak the Word and Jonah was instantly delivered from his serious trouble.

We also have that same merciful God by our side from whom to receive our 'Victory in Christ', when we repent and turn back to God in real faith.

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