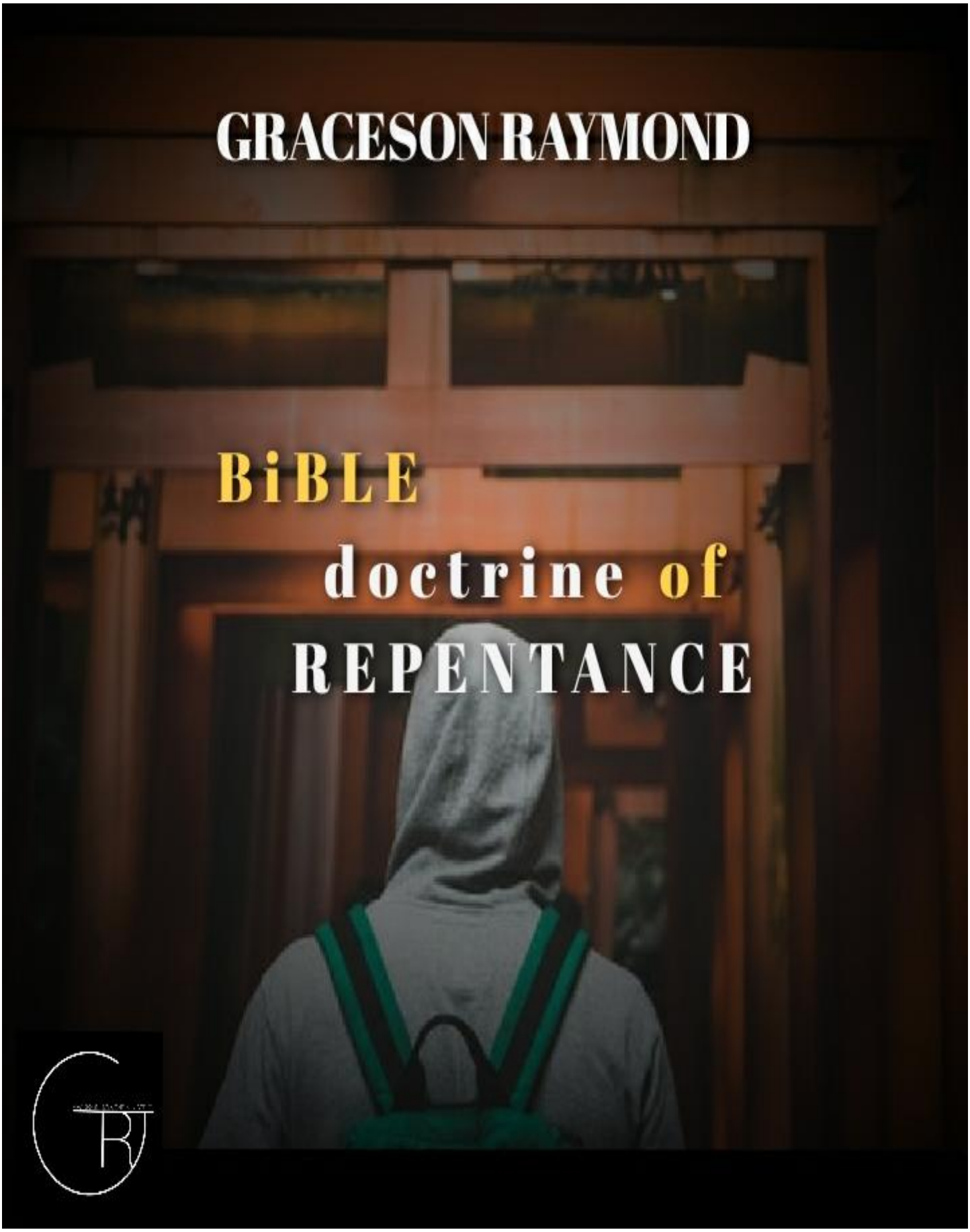

GRACESON RAYMOND
BiBLE
doctrine of
REPENTANCE

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible.

Bible Doctrine of Repentance

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EXEGESIS VERSUS EISEGESIS

Repentance is one of the terms that have been abused by many people in Christendom today. Many people misinterpret and misapply the term "repentance." It's very common to hear some preachers say to their congregation "repent to escape the fire of hell! Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand!" These folks idea of repentance involves crying, being sorrowful, and showing regret for your actions or sins and telling God to forgive you, as well as promising Him not to repeat your actions.

I can boldly say that many people have considered repentance in the Bible to mean something it was not meant to be. The main cause of this can be attributed to how some people study and explain the scriptures. They have taken an eisegetic approach to explaining the scriptures. What do I mean by an eisegetic approach? The word eisegetic is the adjective for the word eisegesis. Eisegesis literally means "to lead into." That means that in the eisegetic approach to the interpretation of the Bible, the interpreter injects his own ideas into the text, making it mean whatever he wants. We can say that eisegesis is when one reads into the text his preconceived ideas. Eisegesis is based on a subjective reading, not an analytical one.

Obviously, eisegesis lends itself easily to error, as the interpreter would attempt to align the text with his own preconceived ideas.

You know what? The proper approach to Bible interpretation is exegesis. The word exegesis literally means "to lead out of." That means the interpreter is led to his conclusions by following the text. Exegesis is concerned with discovering the true meaning of the text, respecting its grammar, syntax and setting. Exegesis allows us to agree with the text ; eisegesis seeks to force the text to agree with us.

2 Timothy 2:15 instructs us to use exegetical methods: "**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**" The word "dividing" as used in the text is the translation of the Greek word "**orthotomeō**" which means "to make a straight cut, that is, to dissect correctly." Have you seen? The writer here is telling us to divide the word correctly. How can you do that? By using exegetical methods to interpret the Bible. Exegesis is the correct approach to Bible interpretation, and every honest student of the Bible will be an exegete, allowing the text to speak for itself. This means that our explanation of repentance in the next few pages will be based on exegesis, not eisegesis.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT REPENTANCE

A misconception is simply an incorrect or inaccurate idea or conception. It can also be explained as an idea that is wrong because it's based on a lack of understanding of a situation or a subject.

There have been many misconceptions about the term "repentance" in the Christian world over the years. The root of these misconceptions is the failure to understand the Bible doctrine of repentance. We can say that misconception is a product of eisegesis.

Different people have different ideas about the topic under discussion that aren't true. Let's consider some of the misconceptions about the term "repentance."

The most common explanation people give to repentance is a change in a sinner's conduct. They think a sinner repents when he is able to put an end to his bad conducts and is able to behave well. In short, they say that the sinner repents and gets saved when he stops sinning and begins to behave well.

Another misconception about repentance is feeling sorry for sin and asking God for forgiveness. I think that sounds familiar in your ears. You know why? It's something that is done in many

churches today. Those involved always weep, and pray for the forgiveness of their sins, and promise not to sin again. Some leaders even call their members to the altar during each service to ask God for forgiveness and promise not to return to sins. That is what some people call repentance.

Again, some folks also consider repentance as water baptism. Those involved consider a repented person as someone who has been baptized with water. The first question many people like to ask when they hear someone say he has repented is: "Have you been baptized in water?"

Although all of the above sounds good in the ears of many people, yet they aren't true. They are misconceptions about repentance.

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

It is always wrong to use the dictionary definition of words to explain a biblical word or term. Take note of this: there is no material given outside the Bible that explains the Bible. The Bible explains itself.

Again, the Bible is not a book of definitions. That means that you can't simply give meaning to a word in the Bible without carefully studying it. An exegetical study of the contents of the Bible is needed to understand the meaning of the words contained in it. Trying to give personal meanings to the words in the Bible will easily end in erroneous understanding and false teachings. A word or term in the Bible must be given biblical meaning.

Every honest student of the Bible should know that the Bible can't mean something today that it never meant when it was originally written. Therefore, the Bible student in his studies should always seek the intent behind the writings.

How various English dictionaries define repentance is totally different from the intent behind it in the Bible. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, repentance is the action or process of repenting especially for misdeeds or moral

shortcomings. The Cambridge English Dictionary also defines repentance as the fact of showing that you are very sorry for something bad you have done in the past, and wish that you had not done it.

The question here is, what does the Bible say about repentance? The word "repentance" in the Greek is the word "**metanoia**." The word "**metanoia**" is a compound word made up of the words (**meta** – change, and **noia** – think). Repentance therefore means "changing your thinking or mindset." In other words, repentance refers to a change from one mindset to another.

Let's consider some cases where the word "repentance" was used in the Bible.

Numbers 23:19 ["God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?]

In the above verse, the writer tells us that God does not change His mind. We can clearly see that repentance here deals with a change of mind.

Psalms 110:4 [The LORD has sworn And will not repent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."]

The above verse also shows us that repentance is a change of mind.

Acts 2:38 [Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.]

Some folks consider repentance in the verse above as a change in the sinner's conduct. But that is not true. It refers to the sinner changing his mind to believe the gospel of salvation. We will examine that carefully in the next pages.

WHEN AND HOW DOES THE SINNER REPENT?

The answers many people give to the above question focus on a change in the sinner's behaviour or conduct. As I have said before, many people regard repentance on the part of the sinner as a change in the sinner's behaviour. As a result, they consider salvation to be a change in behaviour.

You know what? Repentance toward salvation is not a change in behaviour.

Let me explain that with the following scriptures.

Luke 24:47 [and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.]

The above scripture shows that repentance is preached. We can say that repentance in this account is connected with preaching the gospel of salvation. This means that repentance comes when the gospel is preached to the sinner.

Acts 2:38 [Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.]

In the above account, Peter shows us that the Holy Spirit is received through repentance. Repentance here can't be a change in behaviour. This is because the Holy Spirit is not received through a behavioural change. The Holy Spirit is received only by faith in the gospel of salvation. This can be seen in the following scriptures.

Galatians 3:1-11 [1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2 - This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 - Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? 4 - Have you suffered so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? 5 - Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?-- 6 - just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 7 - Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 - And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9 - So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. 10 - For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is

written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 - But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."]

Ephesians 1:11-14 [11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 - that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 - In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 - who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.]

We can clearly see in verse 13 of Ephesians 1 that one is sealed with the Holy Spirit when he believes the gospel of salvation. In this case, we can say that repentance toward salvation is believing the gospel.

Acts 16:30-32 [30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 - So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your

household." 32 - Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.]

Did you notice the answer Paul and Silas gave to the jailer when he asked them what to do to be saved? They answered him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your family." Verse 32 shows us that they spoke the word of the Lord (the gospel of salvation) to him and to all who were in his house. The question here is, how did the jailer repent toward salvation? The answer is very clear! The gospel was preached to him and he believed. In this case, repentance toward salvation is clearly seen as believing the gospel, not a change in behaviour. It's good to behave well, but behaving well can't save a person. Christ is the Saviour, and only faith in him can save a person. Salvation doesn’t happen when one changes his behaviour, but it happens when one believes the gospel of salvation.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

As I explained in one of the previous chapters, repentance toward salvation is not a change in behaviour, but faith in the gospel of salvation. Some folks don't see repentance as faith in the gospel. This is because they have another gospel of their own, which is not the gospel of salvation. It is very common today to hear some preachers yell at people to change their behaviour to escape the fire of hell. That is what some people regard as the gospel. In this case, they explain repentance as a change in behaviour to be saved. These people usually support their message with the words of Jesus in Matthew 4:17.

Matthew 4:17 [From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."]

With respect to the above verse, they explain repentance as a change in behaviour. But do you know it's wrong to say that? Considering what we have learned so far in this book, repentance here could only mean a change of mind from unbelieving to believing.

John 3:16 [For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.]

Romans 10:1-17 [1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 - For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 - For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 - For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 - For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." 6 - But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?"' (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 - or, ""Who will descend into the abyss?"' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 - But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 - that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 - For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 - For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 - For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 - For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." 14 - How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of

whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 - And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16 - But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" 17 - So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.]

It's very clear that the only way to be saved is to believe in Christ. But how can one believe in Christ? One can believe in Christ by believing the gospel. What is the gospel?

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 [1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 - by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. 3 - For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 - and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,]

The gospel is about the finished work of Christ (His death, burial and resurrection). It's only faith in this work of Christ that saves a man. Salvation is not believing the gospel helped by good works or behaviour. The gospel is not about how one must live

well or behave well to be saved. It's about what God has done in Christ for the salvation of man.

2 Corinthians 5:19-21 [19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 - Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 - For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.]

Romans 5:6-11 [11 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 - For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 - Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 - For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 - And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.]

Ephesians 2:4-6 [4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 - even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 - and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,]

It's obvious that salvation is what God has freely done for us in Christ, but not what we do for ourselves. Salvation is by faith in the grace of God in Christ, not by faith in personal efforts. Paul is loud on this in Ephesians 2:8-9.

Ephesians 2:8-9 [8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 - not of works, lest anyone should boast.]

The word “grace” in the verse above is the translation of the Greek word “**charis**” which means something which is freely given. Salvation is freely given; it cannot be merited by works.

Romans 10:9-11 [9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 - For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 - For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."]

Salvation is by grace through faith. One is saved when he believes the gospel, which is the message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Therefore, we can say that it's wrong to explain repentance toward salvation as a change in behaviour. Repentance toward salvation is believing the gospel.

CAN A BELIEVER ALSO REPENT?

Can a believer also repent? I'm asking this question because one may think that repentance is only required in salvation, and that the believer in Christ doesn't need to repent since he is already saved.

The truth is that the believer can repent. But note that the repentance of the believer is not toward salvation since the believer is already saved eternally in Christ. As I have already said in this book, repentance refers to a change in thinking or mindset. The repentance of the believer is known as renewing the mind.

Let us go through the following scriptures.

Romans 12:2 [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.]

Repentance is taught in the above verse as renewing of mind.

Ephesians 4:21-24 [21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 - that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 - and be renewed

in the spirit of your mind, 24 - and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.]

Apostle Paul in the above verses explains repentance on the part of the believer as being renewed in the spirit of your mind.

What follows after salvation is growth. The believer needs to grow after salvation. Spiritual growth is very important for every believer. Keep in mind that spiritual growth isn't an attempt to earn salvation or keep salvation. We are saved and kept eternally by grace. Spiritual growth is about taking advantage of your inheritance in Christ through knowledge.

1 Peter 2:2 [as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,]

There can't be spiritual growth without knowledge. Growth is a function of knowledge. Brother Paul spoke of this in **Philemon 1:6 [that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.]**

As the believer is taught God's word, he allows it to change his thinking and mindset. He has the ability to do so because he is

born of the Word. The believer's origin is in the Word, therefore the Word is not strange to him. The believer repents every time he receives the word, thinks through, meditates on it, and takes his living from it. That shows that repentance is not a one-time activity in the life of the believer. He repents every time he has a change of mind on a particular thing through the knowledge of the word. We can conclude by saying that the believer repents when he changes his mind about God or about himself on a specific subject through the knowledge of the word.

GOD'S GOODNESS LEADS TO REPENTANCE.

Some people have a strong belief that repentance comes through condemnation and fear. That's why it is common to hear many preachers today condemning people and putting fear in them through their messages.

The truth is that repentance is not a product of fear and condemnation. Every repentance that comes out of fear and condemnation is false. For example, when you tell people that they will be in hell fire if they do not live a sinless life, clearly they will stop sinning for a while out of fear, but they will surely go back to it as everything that comes out of fear and condemnation does not prosper. Scaring people doesn't bring genuine repentance. God Himself does not want us to live in fear and condemnation. He wants us to live in His love and grace.

What exactly brings about genuine repentance?

Romans 2:4 answers the above question.

Romans 2:4 [Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?]

The goodness of the Lord brings repentance. Repentance comes when people come to the knowledge of the goodness of God. There can be no genuine repentance without the knowledge of God's goodness. This is why the gospel is founded on the love and grace of God. The gospel isn't a message of condemnation and fear. It is a message of God's goodness in Christ. When the goodness of God is preached, people begin to abandon their religious ideas about God, and replace them with the Word. They begin to see God as a loving Father, and they appreciate God's love. This is what produces a true repentance in the minds of people.

1John 4:18-19 [18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 - We love Him because He first loved us.]

The above verse really opens our minds on this subject. We begin to love God and appreciate His things when we come to the knowledge of how He first loved us. Genuine repentance comes when you know that God loves you, and He is not against you. I believe you have even repented (changed your mind) on many things by reading this book.

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Graceson Raymond is a Ghanaian preacher and teacher of the Word. He is the president of Charis Outreach Ministries, a church located in Ghana. Pastor has a mandate on his life to reintroduce the true God in Christ to this generation. He equips Christians to know their inheritance in Christ through his sound doctrines. Pastor Raymond has a vision of spreading the gospel of grace and the word of truth through soul winning, building churches and disciplining nations.

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THE END