

# Rise Up And Build

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*"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18*

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## **Repent Or Perish!**

(1) *"There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. (2) And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that those Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?' (3) 'I tell you no, but unless you **repent** you will all likewise **perish**. (4) Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwell at Jerusalem? (5) I tell you, no, but unless you repent you will all likewise **perish**"* (Luke 13:1-5).

The conversation recorded in these verses took place between Jesus Christ and certain unnamed persons who called our Lord's attention to some Galileans that were slain by Pilate while they were involved in offering sacrifices to God. Jesus, Who "*knew what was in man*" (cf. John 2:25), knew what these people were thinking as well as He knew what they were *saying*. As is implied by the question asked, Jesus knew that the people with whom He conversed, were thinking that those who suffer the most are worse sinners. In fact, in this conversation two groups of people who grievously suffered were cited — the ones whom Pilate slew and the 18 souls killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them. In both instances the people referred to suffered untimely deaths. But neither group were "*worse sinners*" than other who suffered no such fate. The "bottom line" is this; the people Jesus conversed with were also sinners, so He repeatedly said to them "*unless you repent you will all likewise perish.*" In this case, it was either "**repent**" or "**perish!**"

However the need to "*repent*" is not an isolated situation. To the contrary, the apostle Paul addressed the philosophers at Athens and said that "*God now commands all men everywhere to repent*" (Acts 17:30). Who, we ask, must repent? The answer: "***all men everywhere!***" The need to repent is as universal as is the existence of sin, and the Bible affirms that "***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God***" (Rom. 3:23).

It is difficult (perhaps impossible) for any of us to comprehend the heinousness, or the sinfulness of sin. Sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1,2). The ultimate destiny

of those who live and die in sin is biblically described as a “*lake of fire*” (Rev. 20:15), “*the lake which burns with fire and brimstone*” (Rev. 21:8). When one considers the eternal consequences of sin, and the price paid for our redemption (John 3:16; Rom. 3:23-26; I Peter 1:18,19), he has to conclude that sin is a terrible thing. In the hereafter, lost sinners who have been cast into “*the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41) will all surely agree that sin is no laughing matter! Surely, in view of these facts, it is imperative that every accountable person deal with the sin problem in his own life. And this includes genuine repentance!

### **But What Is Repentance?**

“*Repentance* is translated from the Greek *METANOIA*, which denotes an after thought, a change of mind. It is a change of mind with reference to sin, which involves a turning away from sin, and a turning to God. It is an inward change which results in the outward bearing of “*fruits worthy of repentance*” (Matt. 3:8).

### **What Produces Repentance?**

**1. Faith in God.** Inasmuch as all sin is “*against God*” (Gen. 39:9; cf. Ps. 51:4; Luke 15:18), and inasmuch as “*repentance*” is “*toward God*” (Acts 20:21), then it should be evident that one must have faith in God in order to repent of sins committed “*against God*.” For that matter, we read in Hebrews 11:6 that “*without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” Repentance is a part of that process whereby one comes “*to God*,” but in order for one to come to God he “*must believe that He is.*” Incidentally, if one must “*repent*” or “*perish*,” and if repentance is different from faith (and it is!), then it should be evident that no sinner can be saved by **faith alone!**

**2. The goodness of God.** In his letter to the saints in Rome the apostle Paul said “*the goodness of God leads you to repentance*” (Rom. 2:4). God is definitely good! “*He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust*” (Matt. 5:45). “*Every good gift and every perfect gift...comes down from the Father of lights...*” (Jas. 1:17). It is in Him that “*we live and move and have our being...*” (Acts 17:28). God is ultimately the Supplier of every morsel of food we eat, every drop of water we drink, and every breath of air we breathe. The rolling hills, majestic mountains, sparkling streams, beautiful flowers — yea, all that is, find their origin in God — the God Who “*so loved the world*” that He Sent His Son to die in our stead and make our redemption possible (John 3:16; Matt. 26:28; I Peter 1:18,19, etc.). When a sober-minded person pauses to reflect upon the goodness of God, all that He **has** done for us, **is** doing for us, and **will** do for us eternally (if we do His will), then the very thought of having, through sin, offended His infinite holiness is cause for great remorse.

**3. An Awareness of Personal Sin.** “*There is none righteous, no, not one*” (Rom. 3:10). “*...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). “*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us*” (I John 1:10). Friend, sin is real, sin is deadly, sin is personal, and **you** have sinned!

The tragedy, however, in today's society is that many have ceased to be aware of sin — especially sin in their own lives. Supposedly, an alcoholic is just a sick man, a liar has an overactive imagination, a homosexual has simply chosen an alternate life style, a woman who deliberately aborts her own baby is doing nothing more than exercising control over her own body. In other words, it is getting more and more difficult to find a plain, old fashion sinner. Of course, the reality is that all have broken the law of God, and that is what sin is; it is **a transgression** of divine law (I John 3:4). But before a person can be moved to repent of sin he must first become aware of the fact that he is a sinner—a **lost** sinner!

**4. “Godly Sorrow.”** *“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted, but the sorrow of the world produces death”* (2 Cor. 7:10). “Godly sorrow” is the “sorrow” one experiences when he realizes that he has sinned against God...that very One Whom he must “love” with all his heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37). The greater one's love for God is, the greater his sorrow when he realizes that he has sinned against God! On the other hand, one might simply possess “*the sorrow of the world,*” feeling sorry he got **caught**, but not sorry that he (through sin) has offended the infinite holiness of God.

**5. An awareness of the approaching Judgement!** The statement that God “*now commands all men everywhere to repent*” is immediately followed by the statement that “*He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world...*” (Acts 17:30,31). Yes, there will be a day of reckoning! Judgment day is coming! We will be there, and each one of us will be judged according to the deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10).

There are also other things which produce repentance. But repentance is not produced by church socials, church-sponsored recreation, and religious hootenannies — all of which leave the heart untouched and the soul unsaved.

### **But Most People Refuse To Repent!**

Some, like Adam, simply “pass the buck,” and blame their own transgressions upon someone else (Gen. 3:12) Others, like King Saul, deny personal guilt, even though the facts prove that they have broken the law of God (I Sam. 15:13-15). Like David, after his illicit affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:2-17), many try to cover up their sins. Multitudes turn to drugs, alcohol, or to other forms of escapism. But those who want to go to heaven above all else genuinely repent of their sins.

### **Conclusion:**

Unless a person can be made to **feel lost** he is not going to become real interested in being **saved**. And until a sinner admits that he has sinned, and is made aware of the temporal and eternal consequences of sin, he is not likely to repent. But, friend, facts are facts. While there are other steps to be taken in being saved (such as faith, confession, and baptism), it is a fact that all sinners must repent. It is an either/or proposition — either “**repent**” or “**perish**.”

—B. Witherington

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