

The Repentance and Intercession leaflets

An Introduction to the leaflets.

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2. Praying with Repentance
(using Daniel 9),
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they have been combined here as
one complete document.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE REPENTANCE AND INTERCESSION LEAFLETS

Repentance is not a quick fix - its a Way of Life it takes time and much prayer, thought and tears.

1. First we need to recognise and admit everything we know that we have done wrong; as well as admitting all the good things which we have failed to do.

2. Then we need to recognise that, as descendants of Adam and Eve, we are SINNERS. This is our nature. We want our own will, our own way, our priority. Life should revolve around Me. Me. Me.

But this is not what God says. He says that He made us to worship Him and enjoy Him forever. That He will lead and guide us into all truth. And more than that, He is the way, the truth and the life.

Will we come to Him and trust Him with our lives?

3. What about our SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS? We must repent of this also. 'All our righteous acts are as filthy rags'. Isaiah 64:6 For there is only one who is righteous - and that is God alone.

We are sinners - saved by grace - and have no righteousness. All we can do, is love and worship the Lord - and be obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit - and still we are as dirt.

4. And then we have to repent also of our UNBELIEF. That God actually said this, or asked us to do that - and we let our unbelief get in the way of obedience. We need to recognise too, some of the harm that our independent actions have caused. We are not isolated units.

We need to weep and cry out to the Lord, for mercy.

It is certainly not a quick fix. Tears and more tears - and recognition of our sinful nature are required. And our need for a Saviour, who can help us, lead us and guide us into His ways.

Resources for Prayer (1)

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

There are many calls for repentance in the nation in recognition of the ways in which we have rejected the word of God and strayed from the paths of righteousness. But what does repentance mean? Are we calling for people to apologise to God or to feel sorry for things that have been done? What is the biblical meaning of repentance?

Metanoia

The word as originally used in the New Testament is *μετανοιω*, (metanoia). A good example in the teaching of Jesus is in Luke 17:3 where Jesus says *“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.”* Jesus then elaborates this by saying that it doesn’t matter how many times your brother sins against you in a single day and says “I repent”, you must forgive him.

Change of Mind

In order to understand this teaching, it is necessary to look at the original Greek – *καὶ ἂν ἑπτὰκις τῆς ἡμέρας ἀμαρτήσῃ εἰς σέ καὶ ἑπτὰκις ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς σέ λέγων· μετανοῶ, ἀφήσεις αὐτῷ.* Literally this reads: *“And if seven times a day he sins against you and seven times returns to you saying I repent, you must forgive him.”* The word *μετανοῶ* (metanoia) in this context means – to undergo a change in frame of mind and feeling. It is not an apology: it is a declaration of a basic change of mind and

Change of Practice

The word is used in a similar context by John the Baptist when preaching in the desert of Judaea. He declared *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!”* (Matt 3:2). Here, the word ‘metanoia’ is used specifically meaning, “to make a change of principle and

practice, to reform.” There is no suggestion here of apologising for the past or calling upon people to say that they were sorry for their past actions.

This is a demand for action: it is calling for a change in personal and corporate values leading to reformation.

Change of Heart

The same word, ‘metanoia’ is used by John the Baptist in his preaching. He is looking for a right outcome through a change of heart in the people. His call in **Matthew 3:8** “*produce fruit in keeping with repentance*” is specifically a call for “a change of mode of thought and feeling – repentance”. It is more in line with the teaching of Jesus regarding forgiving those who sin against us but change their attitude and thoughts.

Paul uses ‘metanoia’ in a similar way in Acts 20:21 where he says “*I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus*”. The repentance he was looking for was an inward change of heart similar to his exhortation in Romans 12:2, “*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” That is the kind of change Paul wanted to see. He believed that to be true repentance.

Reformation

There are two other places where ‘metanoia’ is used in the New Testament that give a different understanding of the word but which add to our grasp of what is meant by ‘repentance’ in the Bible. The first is found in the teaching of Jesus in **Luke 15:7** where he tells a parable of the lost sheep and the good Shepherd who goes out into the countryside searching until he finds his lost sheep. He then carries the sheep home on his shoulders and calls his friends and neighbours to rejoice that the lost sheep is now safely restored to its rightful place in the flock.

Jesus says that in a similar way there will be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents – who experiences a practical reformation – whose actions show a change of life, rejecting the values of the world and coming into the Kingdom. This teaching is one of Jesus’ ‘parables of the Kingdom’ where the emphasis is upon life-changing experiences that are practically demonstrated in the lifestyle of the believer.

Reversing the Past

Yet another use of the word ‘metanoia’ in quite a different setting is helpful to study. It is found in **Hebrews 12:17**. Here we read *μετανοίας γὰρ τόπον οὐχ εὔρεν* – “for of repentance he found no place”. This is referring to Esau having sold his inheritance-rights and then changing his mind. Esau wanted to reverse the past – metanoia – to carry out a basic change, but he was unable to do so.

Summary

This brief look at the way ‘metanoia’ is used in the New Testament shows a wide variety of uses.

All of them, however, involve ‘change’ in some way, which gives a very different meaning to that of our modern use of the word ‘repentance’. We usually think of repentance as meaning that we feel sorry for what we have done, which involves us in some form of apology.

But the New Testament use of the word is associated with ‘action’ – a ‘change of heart and mind’ leading to actions of ‘transformation’.

That is true repentance in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles.

Resources for Prayer (2)

PRAYING WITH REPENTANCE

(using Daniel 9)

There are many calls today to pray for the nation with a spirit of repentance but many Christians find this difficult. How do we repent of things for which we feel no responsibility?

We grieve over family breakdown and the suffering of children, of those who are killed on the streets of our cities and the babies that are aborted from their mother's wombs. But we feel helpless in the face of the forces of evil that are sweeping through our nation.

How can we respond to calls to pray in repentance?

This is where the prayer in Daniel 9 is of tremendous help.

Daniel was a righteous man who was not one of the leaders in the nation of Israel.

He was not personally responsible for any of the sins committed in the nation or for the corrupt policies being followed by the nation's political leaders, or for the unfaithfulness of the religious leaders.

Daniel did not even live in Israel: he was in exile; but he received detailed accounts about what was happening in the land of his birth and he was desperately concerned for its welfare and for the moral and spiritual condition of his fellow countrymen.

A Covenant-Keeping God

Daniel's prayer begins with acknowledging the nature of God – that he is a covenant-keeping God of love.

He then identifies with the sins of the nation, even though he himself had not in any way been involved in them.

He was nevertheless a citizen of Israel whose leaders and people had disobeyed the commands of God and thereby had put the nation outside the protection of God.

They had brought upon themselves all the consequences of disobedience promised in Deuteronomy 28 from verse 15.

The Righteousness of God

Daniel's prayer acknowledges the righteousness of God in bringing disaster upon the nation as a result of the things that had been done by its leaders and people.

But he does not say *"They have sinned"* – he says *"O Lord, We and our Kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you."*

God's Mercy

Daniel then speaks of God's mercy and his willingness to forgive even in the face of deliberate disobedience.

He acknowledges, "We have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you."

True Repentance

Of course Daniel could not repent on behalf of the whole nation. We can only repent for ourselves. But by identifying with the sinful nation Daniel then could pray positively asking God for his help: *"O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath"* (v.16). He is then able to pour out his heart before the Lord on behalf of his sinful nation:

"Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see

the desolation of the City that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.

“O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name” (vs.17-19).

Ungodly Laws

In praying this prayer we need to have in front of us the list of ungodly laws that have been passed in Britain since the 1950s to remind us of the things that as a nation we have put upon the Statute Book of the nation:

Laws such as

- the Abortion Law 1967 that has polluted the land with the blood of the innocent:
- the Sunday Trading Act 1993 that directly opposes God’s command to observe a Sabbath Day:
- and the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013, that made homosexual practices equal to the marriage of men and women which is part of God’s act of creation.

Prayers of Repentance

Our prayers of repentance acknowledge that we are part of a nation that has deeply offended the God of Creation and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are ashamed to be part of such a nation that has known the truth for many generations and has deliberately turned away from the word of God to embrace idolatry, lies and deception and is now steeped in corruption and unrighteousness that fully deserves the judgement of a righteous God.

The Faithful Remnant

We nevertheless cry to him whom we know to be a covenant keeping God of love and mercy; that he will hear the prayers of

the faithful remnant in our nation and help us to make his word heard in Britain once again, that there may be a turning in repentance in the nation and that times of prosperity and blessing may come upon the land and upon our people.

Resources for Prayer (3)

THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE

Foundations of the meaning of repentance are found in the Hebrew language, the language of the Old Testament and, by implication, the language of the entire Bible. Indeed, the principle of repentance has been a full part of Judaism for many centuries. The key Hebrew word is *tshuva*, translated to return. When someone has sinned there is a need stop sinning and return to the ways of God. This can apply to an individual or a community, even a nation. It is a process of turning away from what is wrong and turning to what is right in God's eyes.

Conviction of sin

The process begins with a conviction of sin. In a framework of law, it is a matter of conscience when a person recognises that laws are being broken and take steps to put this right. Putting it right could involve making compensation of some kind to someone who has been harmed as a result of the lawless deeds. The Covenant that God made with Israel was based on law and the principle of justice summarised in the maxim eye for eye and tooth for tooth which defined the need of justice for those wronged.

In the New Covenant the righteousness of God's law is not compromised, but the giving of the Holy Spirit brought a new way of conviction of sin. When a person is first convicted of sin and, as a result, desires to please God, this conviction is a ministry of the Holy Spirit and the process of repentance is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Whether by the conscience trained by the knowledge of God's laws, or by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, repentance has the same meaning, an active rejection of wrongdoing, involving sorrow for the sins committed, and a return to the ways that

please God. Thus repentance is active and not passive, and it is something that a person can only accomplish for himself. We cannot repent for another person, and we cannot repent for a nation.

Identification and Intercession

Whilst we cannot repent for another person we can identify with their condition, and this is particularly relevant when that person is blind to what he is doing. If we have been forgiven of sin or if we have experienced something that someone else is doing we know where they are and we can “sit where they sit”. We can, as it were, stand by them in prayer and pray for them with heartfelt feeling. This ministry of intercession is also helped by the Holy Spirit. Whilst we cannot repent for a person, we can pray for them in a way that pleases God.

Confession

Daniel’s prayer for his people in Daniel 9 is not a prayer of repentance. It is a prayer which involves confession (Daniel 9:4). It was a prayer of depth, involving supplications and fasting (Daniel 9:3). In Daniel’s case it was a prayer at a time of fulfilment of God’s promise to bring an end to the Babylonian captivity after the 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2). We must, therefore, be careful not to try to extract a formula from this prayer as if simply following the pattern of prayer God will definitely answer in the same way for our own nation.

Nevertheless, there is a pattern for this prayer in which Daniel confessed the sins of his people – sins that had taken them to captivity.

Britain Today

Law changes have contributed to the sinfulness that is rampant in our nation. Laws that protected have been changed to make “legal” what is contrary to God’s laws. All this after the hundreds of years of God’s blessings and protection when, step by step,

God's laws were written into our statute books. Clearly we are a nation that must repent and return to what is good.

Britain does not have the same covenant as Israel and only Israel can seek God according to the answer that God gave to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:14. But when Jeremiah visited the Potter's House (Jeremiah 7) God spoke the following principle that applies to any nation:

"The instant I speak concerning a kingdom, to pluck up to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it". (Jeremiah 18:8-9)

Only God knows whether He inspired the leaders of the nation to cause us to found our constitution in a Coronation Oath. The Oath includes the promise made by the Monarch on behalf of the nation, **to the utmost of their power to maintain the laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel**, and this Oath puts Britain in a position as close to covenant with God as a Gentile nation can achieve.

Repentance to Britain as a whole means a return in every way to the position made on Oath to God.

The Call to Prayer among Christians

Christians, above all members of our nation, understand the nature of our nation's sins. Their call is to commit themselves to prayers of intercession and confession, asking God to send a Spirit of repentance across the nation.

This is not the first time this has happened. Prayer has been the call to God's people prior to every revival. In revivals God begins to answer prayer by calling His own people to repentance. The testimony of previous revivals is that the Gospel then goes forth afresh and others are called to repentance. There is no limit to the wave of repentance that can then gradually sweep through a

nation, with the result that a wave of desire to be restored to God's ways can ensue.

Returning to God

The principle of Tshuva is to return. At one level this is to return to the ways of God, but this is not the full objective. God is calling His people to return to Him. He longs for our deeper fellowship and He longs for our nation to return both to His ways and to fellowship with Him.

This is the process of repentance that God is calling us to in this very day.

Resources for Prayer (4)

THE MINISTRY OF INTERCESSION

When a person prays to God, it is a conversation between that person and the Heavenly Father, just as a child might approach a parent. It can involve listening as well as speaking. It can be a prayer of thankfulness, or of asking for some particular thing, be it provision of an earthly need, or of wisdom, knowledge or understanding, within a heartfelt expression of love of God, trust, faith, praise and worship. But many prayers are based on a personal need.

There is a difference between intercession and other aspects of prayer. Intercession is not prompted by one's own personal need but on the need of others.

A Priestly Calling

The ministry of intercession is illustrated by the ministry of the Levitical Priests of the Old Covenant. Their ministry centred on the Tabernacle. They received the tithes and offerings and they took the requests of the people to God. This was, in particular, the daily ministry of the High Priest.

It was a calling to come close to God, with true reverence and fear:

“By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified”. (Leviticus 10:3)

For such a calling the Priests were to be properly prepared:

“Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink ... when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die ... that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean”.

(Leviticus 10:9-10)

The entire Book of Leviticus helps us to understand our priestly ministry through the call of the Priests of the Old Covenant and

the preparation required of them by God. Leviticus 21, for example, is an entire Chapter on the call to holiness.

The Book of Exodus includes other teaching about the ministry of the Priesthood. For example, in Exodus 28, there is a description of the garments of the High Priest. The High Priest's ephod was woven with threads of gold, blue, purple and scarlet. These colours speak of royalty and the ministry of intercession, blue for the heavens, red for the earth and the purple being a blend of blue and red which symbolically show how intercession merges things of earth with things of heaven. On this ephod were two onyx stones engraved with names of the twelve tribes of Israel, so that the High Priest would carry the remembrance of Israel's Tribes before the Lord: *"And you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders as a memorial"* (Exodus 28:12)

This illustrates the calling of the Priests as intercessors for the people – coming before God to carry the needs of the people to Him.

Priests of the New Covenant

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, all believers are now called into a new priestly ministry within the New Covenant: *"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people..."* (1 Peter 2:9)

No longer is there one Tribe called to minister in the Tabernacle, but all are called to minister to one another in the various gifts and ministries that God has apportioned according to His own purposes (1 Corinthians 12).

Among those ministries is the ministry of intercessory prayer. We are all called to prayer.

Occasionally some are called specifically to the deeper aspects of the ministry of intercession, especially at times of crisis. An example of this was the call on a group at the Bible College of Wales to intercession for the nation through the Second World War. They recognised in particular the need to pray for the Jews in the death camps and for the restoration of Israel to their Land after the war.

(Rees Howells: Intercessor, Lutterworth Press, 2003).

The Greatest Intercessor

The Lord Jesus is the High Priest of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8). His sacrifice on the Cross fulfilled the types and shadows of the Old Covenant and transformed them into the ministry of the New Covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood of all believers.

His cry from the Cross, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”* (Luke 23:34) was the deepest of intercessory prayers and now *“He lives at the right hand of the Father to continue to intercede for us”* (Hebrews 7:25).

Those called to the intercessory ministry in our day share in the continuing intercessions of Jesus, which Paul expressed in this way: *“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church”* (Colossians 1:24).

Standing in the Gap

When we fulfil our calling to minister to one another and to God in intercession it is for people who have, themselves, become separate from God. There is a gap between them and God and they cannot pray for themselves. So we stand in the gap on their behalf.

With no-one to stand in the gap, there is the risk of God not withholding His judgement: *“So I sought a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of*

the land, that I should not destroy it; but found no-one. Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and have recompensed their deeds on their own heads, says the Lord God”
(Ezekiel 32:30-31).

The Lord Jesus fulfilled the call of the intercessor to the uttermost: *“Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him”* (Isaiah 59:16).

Identification

Intercession involves identification – understanding the needs of others, seeing their helplessness, often having experienced the same pains as those for whom they pray. Intercessors stand in the gap on behalf of others bearing their need and pain to God as if it were theirs.

This was seen in the baptism of the Lord Jesus, when He went into the midst of repentant sinners who could not achieve their own salvation and immersed Himself fully in baptism in the River Jordan. This stands symbolically for the immersion in His ministry on their behalf, which was completed on the Cross.

Identification with the needs of others is a deep call to ministry. It is not as deep as the Lord Himself went when He suffered for us, but it cannot be taken lightly by those who are called to prepare for their part in the ministry of intercession.

A Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Just as with all ministries a call to the ministry of intercession can be all consuming. It requires preparation and dedication. Above all it is not achieved by the will of the flesh but by the call of God. The ministry is fulfilled through workings of the Holy Spirit in and through us. As Paul said in Romans 12:1, we present our bodies

as a living sacrifice, and as he said in 1 Corinthians 6:19, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

This is why, at times our intercessory prayers are groans that cannot be uttered in words: “...*the Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered*” (Romans 8:26)

For Such a Time as This

Just as when Esther went into the presence of the King of Persia to intercede for her people, so, many of God’s people are being called into the ministry of intercession today. We are not called into the presence of an earthly king but into the presence of God to intercede for the Church and Nation. Just as Esther was prepared so we must be prepared for this privileged and holy task.
