**Repentance**

*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.****2****And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”*

***3****So he told them this parable:****4****“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?****5****And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.****6****And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’****7****Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

***8****“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?****9****And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’****10****Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” (Luke 15:1-10, ESV)*

The news of a sinner repenting ought to be joyful news for us Christians. Greetings dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we talk today about a highly important topic, namely repentance.[[1]](#footnote-1) Very often, this word is used in the wrong way,[[2]](#footnote-2) and it is even sometimes referred to in a negative or unconstructive fashion. To define it succinctly, as Romans chapter 12 says, repentance happens when someone decides to offer their body up to the Lord as a living sacrifice and to allow their mind to be renewed by God, thus being transformed in their life. The word “to repent” in Armenian has nothing to do with the word “world”, though it sounds like it in Armenian. It is made up of two words[[3]](#footnote-3), the second of which means “to cry or to make a scene while crying.” The latter was and still is something that occurs to the one who turns to Christ because the shock from the regret and turning away from past sins and the reception of forgiveness from Jesus Christ is so great. Therefore, today we’re going to talk about the value of repenting unto Christ, as Jesus Himself talks about it. Again, the news of a sinner repenting unto God ought to be a joyful thing for us Christians. Let’s see how the subject is presented…

Repentance unto Christ is so important that even all of heaven rejoices when one person comes to God through Christ. The way that Jesus presents the issue is very simple. The fact of the matter was that the Pharisees and the scribes were very much bound to their own thinking patterns. They could not see the value of when the poor, weak, or people from a different social or economic class would turn unto God through Christ. In a way, they were blinded by their own life-success. That’s why they were complaining about the fact that Jesus “was eating with sinners.” They could not comprehend that God was the one who lifted up the sinner from their predicament, and not the sinner who brought God down to their pit of despair. In both of the given example by Jesus, the one with the man and also with the woman, the same message was being sent to the Pharisees and Scribes. It was that a sinner’s repentance unto God was so valuable that all the angelic armies of heaven would rejoice when such a thing would take place. Therefore, both the Pharisees and the Scribes needed to know the value and the honor of an event like that.

Imagine, for a moment, that someone had been stealing millions of dollars from their boss. Would there be joy if the man only stole one million next year, and the next, a half a million, and after that, a quarter million, and then in the fourth or fifth year, he stole only a few thousand? The above would not cause joy for anyone – that man would still be lying in a jail cell. Similarly, would there be joy if a husband had a drinking issue and was thus abdicating his position in the family, and someone told him to repent slowly? Would there be joy in heaven if he only got drunk once a month? No, of course not.

There is joy in heaven over a sinner who repents unto God because they are essentially resurrected from a dead life. They were lost, and they are now found. They were bound, and they are set free. Scripture says, “He who believes on the Son has eternal life.” Yes, his growth will happen gradually – but his act of repentance unto the Lord is a question of a moment. His life-decision for Christ happens once, after which he begins to grow in his new life gradually.

So, God rejoices in the one who repents unto Him. This means that repenting matters. The one who turns to Christ puts everything that he or she knows aside and considers the previous life that was lived as a dead one with no value (because it was devoid of God), and comes closer and evens runs to the Jesus, to His Cross and Resurrection. We also, if we call ourselves Christians, are called to rejoice when someone comes to Christ, even if they don’t look like us, live like us, or talk like us.

Our mission is to be a witness to the sinner as to what Christ has done in our lives. Our purpose in life is to please our heavenly Father by bringing many repentant people to Him. Today, if you are not sure if you are doing that work correctly, let me give you a simple version of how to do it: Go and tell someone who does not believe in God the way that Christ gave you a new life. However, if you yourself have never decided to follow Christ or to surrender your life to Him as a disciple, now is the time to do that. Once this worship service is over, come up to me and let’s surrender to Christ together with our whole heart, and begin a new life with Him, led by His Word (the Bible) and The Holy Spirit.

Repentance unto Christ is so important that even all of heaven rejoices when one person comes to God through Christ. The news of a sinner repenting ought to be joyful news for us Christians.

May the Lord bless you all, so that you can cause joy to our Heavenly Father’s heart. Amen.

1. As in, coming to Christ – deciding to follow Christ and making Him Lord over your life. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. There are non-Protestant Armenians that look down on the Armenian word “repentance” or “the repented ones”, because some Protestant/Evangelical Christians have been known to put them (the non-Protestant) down for their beliefs and be prideful in their presentation of the Gospel. So, some Armenians have a bad taste in their mouth from “those that have repented.” There are also some non-Protestant Armenians that have an issue with the word “saved” because of the above-described terrible behavior by careless believers not functioning in a loving and patient way. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The word is “abashkharel”, from “aba” (then), and “ashkharel” (to cry, weep). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)