

## *“Jehoshaphat Sought the LORD Through Repentance”*

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Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-4

Every Christian ministry is cyclical in nature. It has its peaks and valleys, its times of growth, struggle, neutrality, and deepening. Our fellowship is no different. As we look forward to the next year, we cannot forget the lessons from our past.

In verse three the statement is made that Jehoshaphat “turned his attention to seek the LORD.” The word “turned his attention” is the Hebrew word “Natan.” Our English word “Nathan” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word. It means, “to give.” Jehoshaphat gave himself to seeking the Lord (2 Chron. 17:3, 4, 20:3).

The idea behind seeking the LORD is best captured in chapter 15 with the exhortation of the prophet Azariah to King Asa of Judah. There is enormous power behind this idea of seeking the Lord (2 Chron. 15:2, 12, 13). There is nothing casual or splintered in this pursuit. Consider the various ideas that are coupled with that of seeking the LORD (2 Chron. 19:3, 22:9, 30:19, 31:21).

Seeking the Lord is neither casual nor accidental. There is intent and design behind it. As a fellowship, I am asking that we prepare our hearts, individually and collectively, to seek the LORD with our entire being, with every area of our life.

Jehoshaphat sought the LORD through repentance, fasting, prayer, and surrenderance. These four actions on his part did not obligate God to act. These four expressions are activities of the Holy Spirit in us through which God is seen and glorified. They testify, not of our spirituality, but of God’s grace. These “disciplines” are not tasks or chores; they are blessings, benefits, treasures, privileges to be enjoyed, tasted, and celebrated. They are not done with a spirit of mourning, but with enthusiasm. They are not things we “have to do,” but rather things we are privileged to do.

These four actions on our part are reminders that the battle is not ours but God’s (2 Chron. 20:15).

The prophet Jahaziel spoke to King Jehoshaphat and said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's.'" (2 Chron. 20:15)

Jehoshaphat consistently turned from his poor choices and sought the LORD through repentance. Failure is never fatal if you learn from your mistakes and continue in your pursuit of the LORD. Repentance is a part of every normal Christian lifestyle. Repentance is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that He is working in us and through us to those around us.

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Repentance has been much debated theologically as to its place in the Christian life. Regardless as to what or how or why one might repent, everyone everywhere at all times must repent. Some repent for initial justification and others for the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Repentance is not a declaration of our commitment or devotion but of our contrition and desperation. We repent because we are a needy people. Repentance is here to stay for a long time. The only time believers will not be repenting is after they leave this temporal existence and start living in the eternal.

Repentance simply means “to turn from.” **Confession of sin is verbalized repentance and repentance is visualized confession.** They are two sides of one coin. All believers confess sin and repent from it simply because it is a work of the Holy Spirit in all of His people. It is like John exhorting believers to love one another for without it the love of God is not in them. Believers have no option but to love. So it is with confession and repentance.

Some people see confession and repentance as the first step before justification and others see it as a necessary component to progressive sanctification. In fact, they see it as the first act to “walking with God” so much so that in its absence no one can be in fellowship with God and thus walk with God. This is not the emphasis Scripture places on this particular fruit. It is part of our daily walk with the Lord only in so far that we still have an old nature, but it has no less or more value than any other works of the Holy Spirit.

Repentance is not something I think about, no more than do I think about loving you. I simply do it as the occasion arises. Repentance is me agreeing with God in confession and turning from my sin in repentance. Yet neither confession nor repentance is possible apart from the Holy Spirit producing this fruit in me.

I repent because of past failure and present compromise. I repent because I fail to do what I should and on that we I should not.

The great thing about our relationship to God is that it is not based on or sourced in what we do, but in what He has done. Repentance does not affect who I am before the Father. Although all of this is true, repentance does have a place in the Christian life.

Repentance is both individual and corporate. There are sins I struggle with that no one else is aware of. There are other areas in which I choose to make myself accountable. In this accounting, I am confessing and repenting. There is an honesty and transparency that can only exist in the context of confession and repentance. If we will not be honest with ourselves and if we cannot be honest with others, then biblical intimacy through confession and repentance will be impossible to enjoy.

May God give us an honesty that confronts our sin and then looks to the cross and Christ for our victory.