



Stumbling Block to Repentance

The average man on the street recognizes that the original sin occurred when Eve ate the forbidden fruit and persuaded Adam to do the same, but what motivated Eve? Pride was at the root of it. And if we will consider the arrogant rebellion of Satan, before the world as we know it, we see that pride was indeed the original sin.

By comparing Isaiah 14:12-14 with Ezekiel 28:17, we learn that Satan's motive was to be "like the Most High." He was prideful because of his beauty, and the position of eminence he had been given. Pride became his stumbling block. If it was his downfall, is it any wonder that he uses it to bring about the downfall of others?

Repentance Is the First Step

Repentance, as we know, is the first necessary step toward the Kingdom of Yahweh. Satan's aim is to keep us from that step through any means he can, especially through pride.

When our Savior began His ministry, His message was, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, (Matthew 4:17).

Those who have observed the signs of the times know that this message is as relevant now as it was then.

The forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist, taught this same message: "...the word of Yahweh came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," (Luke 3:2,3).

According to Luke 1:17, John came "in the spirit and power of Eliyah." We know from Malachi 4:5 that there is to come a "latter-day" Eliyah "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh." Eliyah means, "my El is Yahweh." the message that Eliyah the prophet, John the Baptist, and Yahshua the Messiah were all teaching was that Yahweh is our Mighty One and we must turn to Him in deep contrition and restore His ways. The end-time restoration of the true ways of the Almighty must begin with repentance on the part of His peo-

ple. We can therefore understand Satan's all-out effort to keep people from true repentance.

Repentance Means Reversal

The word "repent" in Hebrew is the primary root "shoob" which means simply "to turn back." The Greek word for repent, "metanoeo," also carries the meaning "to think and act differently." Before a person can even begin to repent, he must be brought to a place in his life where he can admit his faults and sins. This is not an easy thing for many people.

Society teaches people to take great pride in themselves. Consequently, few today are willing to admit their mistakes. The usual response is to run from trouble or mistakes instead of taking responsibility for them.

Repentance takes a great deal of humility. The world in general places little value on this virtue. But it is the humble person that the Almighty seeks, and has mercy upon, as opposed to the arrogant and proud. "For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose Name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones,'" (Isaiah 57:15).

Admitting Faults Is Difficult

Satan, in his deception of mankind, would have people content with themselves just as they are, becoming content with their faults.

Pride works like leaven to "puff up" an individual. He eventually becomes hardened and unable to admit guilt or to feel remorse for his wrongdoings. Proverbs 26:12 says: "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." As long as a person can admit his faults, there is still hope for him. But another verse puts it this way: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall," Proverbs 16:18.

Many religious systems today impose on people a "mind-set" that is totally contrary to true repentance. They are taught, in effect, that their main duty is to their denomination and to the traditions of that denomination, scriptural or not. They are taught to follow the crowd. Independent thought is frowned upon because everyone is supposed to think alike.

People caught up in such a system have a hard time coming to repentance.

Satan uses the same big lie today that he used long ago when he told Eve in the garden, "You shall not surely die," (Genesis 3:4). This same untruth is retold today in the "once saved, always saved" teaching of some denominational groups. If he can get people to believe this, why should they make any changes in their lives? If they're already saved, why bother? So the

sinning goes on.

Jews Rested on Laurels

John the Baptist had a problem of this sort with some of the pharisaical Jews who came to his baptism. We find this recorded at Luke 3:7,8: “Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, ‘O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father:” for I say unto you, that Yahweh is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.’”

These Jews were trusting in the fact that they were physical descendants of Abraham. They were deluded into thinking that as long as Abraham was their father, they more or less had it made. They weren’t overly concerned with showing any real repentance. Again, pride clouded their vision. In this case, it was the pride in their genealogy.

The object of pride can be many things. People can be overly proud of themselves, their children, their riches, their home, their standing in the community or religious affiliation. Pride always works to the detriment of those involved, and leads in the opposite direction from humility and repentance.

Humility Is Vital

Yahshua indicates again in Matthew 18:3,4 that repentance and humility are absolutely necessary for entering the Kingdom. “...Verily I say unto you, except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

A little child shows us this necessary humility in its trusting, loving and obedient nature. This is the same attitude we should have toward our Heavenly Father.

A writer once said that adults are “hopelessly retarded” compared to children. A small child is a logical thinker. He believes what he is told and acts on that knowledge. A child is ready and willing to change when shown a different or better way, while adults spend countless hours reasoning, debating, and arguing about the simplest truths of life and Scripture.

Follow Yahshua’s Example

Yahshua Himself was, of course, the greatest example of humility. Unlike us, He needed no repenting. But His whole life shows us our need of it when we measure ourselves against His sinless example. The thought is awe-inspiring when we consider His exalted nature before He humbled Himself to become our Savior.

Philippians 2:6-10 expresses it well. The Jerusalem Bible brings out the richness of this passage: “His state was sublime, yet He did not cling to His equality with Yahweh but emptied Himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a stake. But Yahweh raised Him high and gave Him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Yahshua...”

Pride works on the principle of self and self-exaltation. But pride need not be our stumbling block to repentance. The believing life is a life of self-less devotion and service to Yahweh and our neighbor, in the example of Yahshua.

Are you willing to do what you can to help others out of the morass of confusion in religion? First we ourselves must become humble and learn the truth of Scripture, submitting our wills to the truth of the Word. Upon learning Yahweh’s way of life, we are to become living examples of obedience and willingness to help others.

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