

David – Contrition

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Repentance is the fundamental requirement of conversion. One of the main reasons **David** was considered **“a man after God’s own heart”** was that **he was always ready to repent** (At13:22). **The next step in “conversion” is “contrition”**. Isaiah makes it clear that “contrition” is required by God (Is57:15, 66:1-2). David is clear that “contrition” is a matter of the heart (Ps51:16-17).

What is “Contrition”? Dictionary definition: the state of being “contrite” – grieving and penitent for sin or shortcoming. **Contrition is related to both “repentance” and “humility”**, but it is NOT the same as either:

- **Repentance:** coming to an understanding of who and what God is and, based on that understanding, recognizing the need for total change as a sinning human being
- **Humility:** an attitude which governs one’s actions and thoughts; it is demonstrated in how one acts in relation to God and other people

As a “state of being”, contrition is what a person actually strives to be with his/her innermost being. Contrition results from repentance and is demonstrated by humility. **Contrition can only be seen by God who looks on the heart.**

David’s Life Lessons: David impetuously jumped to exterminate Nabal (1Sm25:9-10a,13,21-22,32-34). Without considering the consequences, David hired himself and his men out as mercenaries (1Sm27:1-2,8,10b-11a,12). This got David into perhaps his worst predicament – he was nearly required to fight for the Philistines against Israel (1Sm29:6,2-3a,4a). David at first, tried to move the Ark of the Covenant in wagon with disastrous results (1Chr13:1-2a,3a,7-8a,9b-10a,11a,12, 15:1b-3,11a,13,15).

David Demonstrates Contrition: When Absalom enters Jerusalem, David does NOT jump to action. He shows concern for the city and his followers and recognizes the problem was caused by his sin (2Sm15:13-14,19-20,24-26,30a). David accepts the abuse of Shimei, and leaves his fate in God’s hands (2Sm16:5-12). Even though Joab explicitly disobeyed his orders, David recognizes Joab’s wisdom in dealing with the people (2Sm19:1-2,5-8).

David’s Teaching on Contrition: David uses three words frequently, as “technical terms”, to describe what it means to be “of a contrite and lowly spirit”:

- עָנָו - ‘ev’yon, “needy”, “poor”
- עָנָו - ‘anaw, “one who understands himself go be low, humble”
- עָנָו - ‘ani, “poor”, “unfortunate”, “wretched”, “afflicted”

These words have a literal physical meaning, but **David almost always uses them metaphorically with a spiritual meaning.** David’s purpose in writing Psalms was to teach the Way of God – **the understanding of contrition is one of his main objectives.** He frequently applies, to himself, the epithet, “poor and needy”, an expression of contrition (Ps40:16-17, 70:4-5, 86:1-7, 109:21-22, 25:11-12,14,16-18). David was concerned to help those called by God to understand the life lessons God had taught him (Ps9:10,12b,18, 22:23a,24,26, 25:8-10, 37:10-11,14-15, 140:12-13).

“Contrition” in the New Testament: In Greek, there are two words which deal with “contrition”:

- πρᾶυς - praus, adjective, “contrite”
- πραΰτης - prautēs, noun, “contrition”

The English words “contrite” and “contrition” are NOT used in New Testament translation (ESV, KJV). The English word “gentleness” is used most often in translation – “contrition” should lead one to be “gentle”; but, “gentleness” is NOT contrition. There are other Greek words which are properly translated “gentleness”. The word “meekness” is sometimes used in translation, and it is closer to the actual meaning of “contrition” (Mt5:5). In Paul’s list of Christian character attributes, “gentleness” and “meekness” should be translated “contrition” (Cl3:12-13a, Gl5:22-23a).

Contrition is of the Heart: God looks on the heart (1Pt3:1a,3a,4,15-16a) – “gentle” should be “contrite”; “gentleness”, “meekness” should be “contrition”. To be **“brokenhearted”** is to be emptied of all sinful human vanity and to be desirous of all of God’s teaching: **to be contrite** (Ps 34:11,15,17-18). “Contrition” comes from living by the Way of God (Jm1:21-22, 3:13,17, Eph4:1-3) – “meekness” and “gentleness” should be “contrition”. Contrition is only seen by God, but it is manifested in relationships with other people (1Cr4:14a,20-21, Gl6:1-2, 2Tm2:24-25a, Titus 3:1-2) – “gentleness”, “humility”, and “courtesy” should be “contrition”. Jesus is the ultimate example of “contrition” (2Cr10:1) – “meekness” should be “contrition”; (Mt21:1b-2,4-5) – “humble”, “lowly” should be “contrite”. Jesus, himself, expresses it best (Mt11:25,27b-30) – “gentle” should be “contrite”.

Back to David: David, the shepherd, king of Israel, is a type of the King of kings, the Saviour, and True Shepherd of all humanity. David’s greatest life lesson was “contrition”, which comes through following God in faith without fear – living by the Way of God (1Chr22:11-13, 2Sm22:2-3a,7b,17-18a,21-24,29,31a,50-51, 23:1-5)

“Contrition” is a “state of being”, what a person actually strives to be with his/her innermost being, an attribute of the “heart” to which only God can look. In David’s last words, he speaks to True Christians at the end-time:

- prepare to bring the Way of God to all the world
- to fulfill the Plan of God, to bring all humanity to an understanding of the Nature of God
- as **exemplified by the perfect “contrition” of Jesus Christ, the Messiah**

This material is based on the paper “David – a Man After My Own Heart” available at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

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