

Developing & Maintaining a Contrite Mind

Norbert Bohnert—March 16, 2024

Today, as we approach another spring Holy Day season with Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, we know that we consider many things in our personal lives. That starts, of course, *with examining ourselves of where we actually stand spiritually!*

Have we, each one of us, grown up spiritually to the point that we would personally like to, or even go beyond that to the point that God is pleased with us, with the progression we have made? Have we reached that point? *I would dare to say NO!*

We are striving to be called *righteous children of God!* God is depending on each one of us to go through this battle that we are facing:

- this personal battle
- fighting our own carnal nature
- getting rid of our sins
- asking for forgiveness of our sins

The opportunity that God has given each one of us, with the calling that we have received from God the Father.

We know that in many cases what the world values, and what God's values oppose each other tremendously.

Unleavened Bread is symbolic in one sense of a certain state of mind, which is opposite, totally opposite of where the world and our own carnal nature would lead us.

Leaven is a symbolic term conveying a mind of puffing up our own thinking, our own opinions. I think that we can all attest that it is something each one of us needs to continually battle in our walk with God.

This symbolism conveys a mind that occupies a superior position over God, thinking in an inflated, high-minded, and independent way. *That is man's nature!*

This leavened mind that we possess at this time, which is driven by our human nature, is a powerful force that we must continually contend with. We know that it takes the best of us to really, battle this fight that we constantly face.

This mind originated with the adversary—Satan the devil—and was adopted by mankind at creation in the Garden of Eden. Since that time, the human mind has operated independently and at enmity toward the mind of God. Of course, the world created by this mind values wealth, power, influence, prestige, and position.

A person's worth is often measured by what they possess and what they have accomplished by the metrics of the world around us. It is not surprising that God has a different measure of value in thinking that He desires in each one of us to possess, characterized by a certain term that I would like to expand on today.

This word *contrite* used in Scripture conveys the way of viewing ourselves and approaching God that will result in spiritual growth and building on that relationship with God, the one that we desire.

The word is only found, interestingly enough, in the Old Testament, although New Testament terms do convey a very similar meaning.

Psalms 34:18: "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are of **a contrite spirit.**"

- What does it mean to be *contrite*?
- What does the term "*contrite spirit*" convey to us?
- Why would we want to take it on as part of our nature and our way of thinking?

Questions I will attempt to answer with this message. This is what I want to speak to you about today:

- go through an analysis of its meaning
- how it impacts our thinking
- why we should want to take it on as part of our nature

It is part of developing a Godly nature!

So, let us look further into this *contrite spirit* as mentioned in Psa. 34:18. Modern dictionary definitions of *contrite* include:

- conveying a feeling of sorrow or remorse for sin
- a sense of guilt
- a desire for atonement for an action
- an act of grieving and penitence for sin and shortcomings

While we need to certainly repent of sin, we all know that these modern definitions fall short of the full meaning of *contrite* or explaining the *contrite mind*. *Contrite* comes from the Latin word, root word, meaning:

- to grind
- to bruise
- rubbing together in the sense of grinding down or wearing away

This provides a good start to the message that I'm giving and will help in understanding the term from a Biblical perspective.

In the Old Testament, the word *contrite* is found in only four Scriptures, in two books. The four Scriptures are the one I just read:

1. Psa. 34:18
2. Psa. 51:17
3. Isa. 57:15
4. Isa. 66:2

We will get to those verses as we move along!

In all cases, *contrite* is associated either with the spirit or the heart, as in *a contrite heart* or *a contrite spirit!* The Biblical use of heart generally refers to the will, the intellect, and the center of our being.

The center of our being. Spirit and mind could be used interchangeably. Therefore, we are talking about a deep-seated aspect of our nature, the way we think habitually and what motivates our actions.

Far deeper than our logical or rational, logical mind. This is not merely an outward show of worldly sorrow or penance for ongoing so common in traditional religion, or a rational, superficial change in our behavior. This is a deep permanent change in our hearts and minds made only possible with God's direct intervention and involvement through the active use of the power of God, the use of His Holy Spirit.

The Hebrew words are consistent in their meaning of contrite. They convey a meaning of being crushed, literally de-powered, collapsed, bruised, beaten into pieces, or smitten.

When connected to a heart or a spirit, we are dealing with a human mind that is brought low or flattened from a spiritual standpoint. The contrite mind does not exalt itself or stand in opposition to God. It would be the opposite of an inflated, high-minded, or a puffed-up natural mind.

The important aspect of developing a contrite mind is that it is an individual one, and it is totally voluntary. We individually, each one of us, can choose to do this or we can choose not to do that. God will not force it upon us. God is a God that has given us choices for our entire journey and walk in Truth.

This is not a physical crushing or bruising of a person that I am speaking of. We are discussing a spiritual process of crushing, beating down, and voluntarily subjecting our nature, *our natural carnal mind* that dwells in each one of us, *to the will of God!* We succumb to the will of God!

The meaning of the Latin word for *contrite*, a grinding noun or wearing away, suggests a slow, continual process of identifying the aspects of our nature that we must master and subdue.

We stay with it for our entire life, refusing to yield or grow weary in the struggle. This process of becoming contrite also considers how God views it and how He responds to those who are contrite.

Isaiah 57:15: "For thus says the high and lofty One Who inhabits eternity; Whose name is Holy; 'I dwell in the high and Holy place, even with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"

God is saying that after we crush, bruise, and collapse our human nature and will, *He will heal us spiritually* and revive those who voluntarily come to Him with the humble spirit and a contrite mind. After we do what we need to do individually, God will then do what He alone can do. This is to *heal our minds and create a new heart and mind in each one of us!*

Isaiah 66:2: "'All these things My hand has made, and these things came to be,' says the LORD. 'But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word.'"

The word *contrite* is used here again. After God discusses all that He has created, he immediately focuses on whom *He looks upon*, *the one with a contrite spirit who trembles*, or you can say has reverence and deep respect for His Word.

It seems incongruous to the human mind, but from God's perspective, it is central to what He is accomplishing *in His creation of a spiritual family!*

Mankind was separated from God in the Garden of Eden. But God's Plan to create a spiritual family moves forward according to His purpose.

What are the New Testament terms that correlate to contrite, or a poor and spirit, or brokenhearted? The meaning of brokenhearted strongly agrees with that of contrite.

Matthew 5:3: "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus Christ's usage of *poor in spirit* provides additional understanding with the Greek word meaning bitterly, poor, needy, helpless, or powerless.

In reading commentaries, they mention that this state of mind conveys a mind that is destitute of wealth, influence, position, and honor. This is not a

physical definition, but one of a person's state of mind or heart, or how they view themselves.

Jesus Christ was the perfect manifestation of this mind, and the One we should strive to emulate. Christ had wealth, influence, position and honor as the Word, and as a member of the Godhead. But **He willingly divested himself of all this** to suffer, to die a cruel death, and to pay the penalty of sin and redeem mankind.

Philippians 2:7: "But emptied Himself, *and* was made in *the* likeness of men, *and* took the form of a servant; and being found in *the* manner of man, He humbled Himself, *and* became obedient unto death, *even the* death of *the* cross" (vs 7-8).

Jesus Christ abased Himself willingly, being of no reputation, and submitted Himself as a slave, as an example for us.

Matthew 11:29: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls."

Jesus also describes Himself as being gentle or meek, and lowly in heart, which means *lowly or low degree, and humble*. Christ was very humble.

This is the crux of what I'm trying to get across to you today with this message. This is the mind and the nature of Jesus Christ. He does not demand or expect anything from us that He has not already done or already is. That is what we are striving to do:

- to become like Christ
- to think like Christ
- to have the mind like Christ

In summarizing this a little bit, let us review the substance of this message, the substance of what I am trying to convey to you today.

A contrite heart is *a concept deeply rooted in spiritual context*, and is difficult for the average person to actually really understand or even comprehend.

From a Biblical perspective, in the Scriptures that we have read, **a contrite heart refers to a state of being deeply aware of one's**:

- sins
- sinfulness
- brokenness
- need for repentance

King David in Psa. 51 exemplified this when he repented after his grave sin with Bathsheba. He cried out to God, acknowledging his wrongdoing and seeking forgiveness.

Psalms 51:17: "The sacrifices of God are a

broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, **O God, You will not despise.**"

This verse shows us and states the sacrifices of God are a ***broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart***. Here, *contrite* means being crushed or broken due to remorse and humility.

Isaiah 57:15: "For thus says the high and lofty One Who inhabits eternity; Whose name is Holy; 'I dwell in the high and Holy place, **even with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit**, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to **revive the heart of the contrite ones.**"

Emphasizing God's preference for those with a contrite heart and spirit. God values humility. God values repentance and reverence for His Word. He seeks and He desires true worshipers who approach Him in Spirit and in Truth.

John 4:24: "God *is* spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth."

What are the attributes of a contrite heart?

1. **Recognition of Sin**

A contrite heart ***acknowledges*** the sinfulness and the brokenness in our lives.

2. **Humble and Teachable**

It reflects humility and ***the willingness*** to learn and to change.

3. **Sorrow and Repentance**

Contrition, to be contrite, involves ***genuine remorse*** and a desire to turn away from wrongdoing.

4. **Responsibility/Accountability**

Rather than blaming others, a contrite heart ***takes full responsibility*** for their actions.

Why does God value the contrite heart? Well, the answer is ***God loves us and desires our transformation!***

That is what God desires. ***A contrite heart totally aligns with God's overall purpose!*** It contrasts with mere ritualistic sacrifices. ***God values the inner transformation*** over any external rituals. A contrite heart opens the way for God to be present and for God basically to revive us.

In summary, *having a contrite heart means*:

- recognizing our sins, our sinfulness
- humbly seeking forgiveness
- desiring transformation; change

It is an essential aspect of developing our personal relationship with God.

As we approach another Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, I would ask us all to consider the importance of *the contrite mind* in our personal relationship with God. Realize the extent, the importance of developing such a mind.

The one of a *contrite mind* and a *contrite heart is the one with whom God dwells* and the one He looks upon favorably. We should desire this mind so that we can be like our Savior and elder brother Jesus Christ, Who set the perfect example for us to follow.

IF that is done, ***IF*** we can work toward that, ***THEN*** we have the opportunity that God can actually come to us and say”

Isaiah 66:2: “‘All these things My hand has made, and these things came to be,’ says the LORD. **‘But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word.’**”

That is what we are striving to do in our walk with God, ***in our personal relationship to develop this contrite mind and heart!***

This is a topic that I have not heard many messages in the past or not remembered them anyhow. So, I thought I would share this message with you and help us as we prepare for another Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Thank you again for being here this Sabbath Day. May you all be blessed over the upcoming spring Holy Day season. Have a tremendous and uplifting rest of the Sabbath Day.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Psalm 34:18
- 2) Isaiah 57:15
- 3) Isaiah 66:2
- 4) Matthew 5:3
- 5) Philippians 2:7-8
- 6) Matthew 11:29
- 7) Psalm 5:17

NB:bo/po
Transcribed: 4/22/24

Copyright 2024—All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means without the written permission of the copyright owner. This includes electronic and mechanical photocopying or recording, as well as the use of information storage and retrieval systems.