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In the Direction of Salvation

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Getting from one place to another can be a real chore, especially if there is something wrong with your steering mechanism. The right direction has always been a matter of pointing yourself toward where you want to wind up. If you want to end up in Nome, Alaska you certainly would not set your sights on Pretoria, South Africa. I hate to admit things like this publicly, but confession is good for the soul. I can't count the number of times I have turned onto the freeway and taken off down the road with a big old grin on my face traveling at maximum legal speed in the wrong direction; going the wrong way but getting there in a hurry. Happy as a lark right up to the point that I see the sign informing me I am going away from where I want to be. It never seemed to matter whether the wrong turn was a matter of being obstinate or ignorant, or just not paying attention. I was still going the wrong way.

This, as close as I can determine, is the spot we find ourselves in spiritually when we see or hear signs from GOD's word that we are not in line with His GPS for our destiny.

John the Baptist came preaching "repent" or turn from the direction you're going or the way you are thinking. The Lord Jesus began His ministry with exactly the same words, "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". You are going to have to change your direction if you want to enter the kingdom. How drastic would those turns have to be? That depends completely on our angle of departure. Have you ever tried to follow a painted line on the road, riding a bicycle? Even if you are already going in the general direction the line is going, it is still taxing to get perfectly aligned. I remember how difficult it was to keep the wheels dead center on the line. It's nearly impossible to stay on that line. The turns required are minimal but even the smallest increments left uncorrected eventually turn into great distances from where we want to be. The slightest pressure or influence from the right or the left or distraction causes a departure from the intended path. Whether the deviation from the intended is intentional or not really has no bearing on direction. We are still headed where we are headed. Exactly what is it we are thinking when we see GOD's will pointing in one direction and we find ourselves doing or going away from our goal? TURN. We cannot get there without turning. If the map says turn why would we argue?

If I understand the Lord Jesus' statement to the most religious people of His day, "you have heard that it was said, but I say to you", He is about to tell them to turn. What direction or how much would have been different with everyone.

Let's go back to my freeway. Again we find ourselves traveling at maximum legal speed, going somewhere fast. Then comes the big epiphany; a giant lighted sign informing us of our misdirection. Immediately we start looking for a place to turn around. We make the u-turn and sigh a big sigh of relief because now we have corrected the problem. Well, not exactly, how long have we been going in the wrong direction? How much farther are we from our goal. The realization hits us that we must remove the consequences of our misdirection. We not only have to turn we must now go, move, travel in the right direction to remove that which separates us from our destination. The Greek word *hatria* appears 174 times in the NT and 172 of those times it is translated sin. Strong's G266 defines it as missing the mark or straying from the path. Our Lord has been warning us from the very beginning not to turn to the right hand or to the left, nor add to or take away from His word. Deut. 4:2, 5:32

To put it plainly, sin, missing the mark is what separates us from GOD. That distance must be removed before any reunion is possible with our maker. GOD doesn't go anywhere. We left and we must return. Once sin (the distance) is wiped away, we are reconciled with our GOD.

In Acts 2, the apostle Peter preaches the first sermon recorded in Luke's historical account. After the Holy Spirit gets Jerusalem's attention with the sound of the rushing wind and the tongues as of fire, Peter preaches a fiery sermon with four main points: Jesus was a man approved of GOD, you killed Him, GOD raised Him, and He is now exalted to the right hand of GOD.

After seeing these points proven with scripture and eyewitness testimony, at least 3,000 people realized they had walked away from GOD by murdering their messiah. He was not a blasphemer, worthy of death. He was indeed the Son of GOD. Realizing their error (seeing that giant sign on the freeway) they now ask Peter, "what must we do?"

Acts 2:37

Peter responds, "repent". Why didn't he say, "believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved"? I think it safe to say we are beyond that point with these folks. They would not have asked "what shall we do" if they were not convinced Jesus to be the Christ, their long awaited messiah. Without question, these GOD fearing Jewish people, now overwhelmed with guilt want to come back to their GOD, and turning around is the first step past the freeway sign and they take the turn.

Peter then tells these repentant believers to be baptized (buried) in the name (the authority) of Jesus Christ, for (in the direction of, or for the purpose of) the forgiveness of sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (salvation).

The apostle Paul, in Romans 6:1-6 describes this as fulfilling what the Lord Jesus said was absolutely necessary. One must be born again. (John 3:3-5) Paul writes in Romans 6:3-4, "do you not know that those of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death. Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death so that as Christ was raised from the dead so we too might walk in newness of life". We are buried in baptism and raised with a new life.

Peter urges these newborn babes in Christ to long for the pure milk of the word that they might grow in the direction of their salvation.