

The Circuit Rider

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Repentance

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:45-47)

The necessity of repentance is clearly taught in the sacred volume of God’s Holy Word (Mk. 2:17, Lk. 13:3). Unless a sinner has ever truly repented, he has no right to consider himself converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a stranger to repentance is to be a stranger to God Himself. Scripture teaches that we must repent (Acts 2:38, 3:19, 17:30). Genuine godly repentance is not merely getting alarmed over some sin that we’ve committed. False repentance is far too prevalent in the modern day church which is proven by the falling away from one’s profession (II Pet. 2:22). Real repentance is a deep felt sense of sin, condemnation of us on account of that sin, and a turning away from it and denouncing it. If we have no sorrow for having offended Almighty God, then we treat Him with less respect than a mortal man of whom we will apologize.

It’s true that no command to repent is given in the Ten Commandments, but from the very beginning of the New Testament, it was commanded for us to “repent ... for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mk. 1:4). The first duty required of man in responding to the claims of the gospel is to repent (Mk. 1:15). Without repentance, not a step can be taken

in faith toward God to receive his divine favor. Therefore, the understanding of the doctrine of repentance is of highest importance because every sinner is under just condemnation from God. Before a sinner can repent, God must first regenerate the soul and grant the gift of repentance along with the gift of faith to believe.

The Meaning of Repentance in Salvation

From the Hebrew comes three words that have been translated either repentance or repent. First, there is the word *nocham* which means sorrow and is translated repentance (Hos. 13:14). Secondly, there is the word *nacham* which means to be sorry or comfort and is translated repent (Ex. 13:17). Thirdly, there is the word *shuwb* which means to return or turn back and is translated repent (I Kings 8:47, Ezek. 14:6).

In the Greek, there are two forms of words, which are also translated repent or repentance. Only one of these is used of repentance that is associated with salvation from sin. It is the verb *metanoeo*, and the corresponding noun, *metanoi*, repentance. The other Greek word, *metamellomai*, is found several times, such as in the case of Judas (Matt. 27:3). In its original form as we see from the verb and noun usage, the word means to reconsider, to perceive afterwards, to change one's view, mind, or purpose. It relates the disapproval and abandonment of previous opinions and purposes and the adhering to different ones. Changes in outward behavior results from and is the outflow of inward change. Repentance is a change of mind for the better, which produces a change of action and conduct.

The meaning of Christian repentance can be derived at because of what is involved in such a drastic change brought about in an individual life to the glory of God. Repentance also includes regret and sorrow for past acts of sin. Such a thing can only take place when there has been a change in one's views regarding sin and holiness. True godly sorrow over sin is not simply a remorse that will pass away, but a heartfelt change in the inward soul of man towards God. It's possible for people, like Judas, to be sorry they got caught in their sin. But, there is a difference between being sorrowful for your acts of sin and being sorry that your sin found you out (Num. 32:23). It's possible for men to be outwardly reformed, as in the case of the Pharisees, yet not repentant of their sins (Matt. 21:32, 23:28). Only God given repentance is lasting and effective and fills the repentant heart

with peace and joy. It even causes heaven to rejoice when a “sinner ... repenteth” (Lk. 15:7).

The Difference Between Human Repentance and Christian Repentance

Christian repentance is not only an intellectual, but spiritual perception of the opposition between the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. Therefore, it involves the guilt of wrongdoing and the regret of doing it. It includes a desire to reconcile with God and escape the punishment that our sin deserves. Being pardoned by God’s grace doesn’t cause the truly repentant sinner to lose sight of his sin (Rom. 7:24). A genuinely penitent heart will acknowledge not only the greatness of his sin, but his deserving of judgment. By earnestly turning to God, a repentant sinner seeks forgiveness of his sin and pardon from its guilt. Godly sorrow is always accompanied by deep regret over sins committed and a determination with God’s help to avoid them in the future. Like all other of God’s graces that have been bestowed upon us, we are undeserving of them all and it is His “goodness” that grants them us to (Rom. 2:4).

The Author of True Repentance

The seat of true repentance is within a person’s soul, but it originates with God Himself (Acts 5:31, 11:18). Godly repentance is not merely an intellectual knowledge of sin. It’s a confession of the awfulness of sin and a desire to turn and forsake it. True repentance is absolutely inconsistent with the continuance in sin as before. Real repentance will touch the mind, but it will also change our spiritual emotions. Our view of sin and God will be totally altered when we meet God in repentance. The aftermath of such sorrow will bear evidence in “fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8).

Man cannot pump repentance from his heart like he would pump water from a well. That is because God is the Sovereign author of repentance (II Tim. 2:25). God is the One Who powerfully moves, encourages, and induces a sinner to turn from his sin by His pardoning grace and mercy through Christ. A repentant heart cannot help but bear evidence of God operating upon it spiritually in truth. The manner in which God grants repentance unto life is like “faith” that comes “by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). By the preaching, teaching, and reading of God’s Word, the Holy Spirit moves upon the heart of a sinner, convicts of sin, gives repentance and faith to trust Christ to the saving of his soul. Conviction of sin is the starting point in repentance. Conviction leads to confession as the sinner turns to Christ, acknowledging Him as his all-

sufficient Savior from sin. A heart felt remorse of sin drives the soul to Christ and unites with the exercise of faith. Therefore, repentance and faith are inseparable graces wrought in a sinner's soul by the regenerating Spirit of God (Acts 20:21). Repentance and faith must go hand in hand; or else you will have a penitent unbeliever or an impenitent believer. These are twin graces that must occur simultaneously, meaning that they are two aspects of one act.

Not only do lost sinners need to repent, but so do believers who fall into sin and displease God (Rev. 2:5). Repentance is not a single act that is done only at the time of conversion to Christ. It should remain a part of a believer's life until he is taken home to heaven. David is a good example of this from the pages of the Old Testament (Ps. 51). There is daily cleansing for a believer who will confess his sins and walk in fellowship with God (1 Jh. 1:9).

Closing

To pursue the study of Scripture apart from the illuminating grace of God is to deny oneself spiritual understanding. "Truth" (Jh. 14:6) cannot be treated as just another science to be studied. God's Word is a supernatural Book just as repentance, faith, and grace are supernatural works of God alone. Without God's intervention in our lives, his Word will never be enjoyed nor repentance and faith appreciated.

To be at ease in sin is proof that one's heart is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). Every one whom the Holy Spirit quickens becomes aware of the awfulness of his sins and feels the pain of disobedience. Only God's pardoning mercy may alleviate the anguish of remorse. Turning to Christ in faith is impossible without turning away from sin in repentance. There can be no saving faith without repentance just as there can be no trusting Christ as Savior while refusing Him as Lord.

A Ministry Update

We enter into 2009 with great excitement and expectation as to God's blessings upon us as unworthy recipients of His grace. I've begun the writing of my book, dealing with the various experiences over my past forty years of ministry. I don't know how long it will take me to complete this project, but it's been said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. Well, I've taken my first step. I remind all within listening distance of the Triad, that our weekly radio broadcast can be heard over WTRU at AM830 every Sunday afternoon at 1:00 PM. The entire Book of James has been completed and can be heard on the audio page of our web site at

www.covenantofgraceministries.com. As always, thank you for your prayers and financial support of this ministry.

Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM