

Repentance

Introduction. The greatest obstacle to salvation is the obstinacy of the human heart. It is difficult to persuade people to repent. When reading the gospels, we see the Lord had the same difficulty (Matthew 11:20). He did not say what He did because they did not believe or because they refused to be baptized, but because they did not repent.

Considering how difficult it is to bring people to repentance, and without repentance there is no salvation, it is important that we study repentance. We do not hear a lot of lessons on this principle, but it is so fundamental, we should not neglect to know everything we can about it.

I. The Definition Of Repentance

A. What repentance is not.

1. Repentance is not sorrow and guilt. People may be very sorry for sinning, but not understand repentance. Who is not sorry when they do wrong?
2. Repentance is not tears. If you shed tears every moment of your life over your transgressions, it will never atone for what has been committed against God.
3. Repentance is not being scared of the consequences. Most people only fear the ramifications of what they do. Something far deeper is involved in repentance.
4. Repentance is not attending worship services. Some have the mistaken idea that if they go to worship services and claim they have sinned, they have repented.

B. What repentance is.

1. Repentance is defined as a change of mind, arising from the conviction that one has done wrong. It has been defined as "to perceive afterwards."
2. When someone repents, they not only change their mind, but they also turn to God and abandon sin in heart and in practice (Acts 3:19; 11:19-21; 26:19-20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9).
 - a) Repentance is a very deep and practical change that makes man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved.
 - b) Repentance manifests its reality by producing good fruits appropriate to the new spiritual life (Matthew 3:8).
3. Alexander Campbell said, "Repentance, with me, is a change of heart, true and genuine, issuing in an entire reformation of life — an unfeigned sorrow for the past, a firm resolve for the future and a practical amendment of life both in thought and deed. It is the fruit of a firm belief of the divine testimony, and must always follow,

never precede the faith concerning God and Christ as revealed in the gospel.”

II. The Nature Of Repentance

- A. It involves the intellect.
 - 1. Intellectually, we must consider sin as utterly heinous, the divine law as perfect and binding, and ourselves as falling short of the requirements of a holy God (Job 42:5; Psalm 51:3; Romans 3:23).
 - 2. When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, called upon the Jews to repent, he called upon them to change their minds and views regarding Christ (Acts 2:14-36).
- B. It involves the emotions.
 - 1. We cannot be emotionally indifferent to sin. Before there can be a turning away from unrighteousness, there must be consciousness of sin’s effect on humanity and its offensiveness to God. We have to therefore abhor sin.
 - 2. In 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, Paul mentions a godly sorrow and a worldly sorrow.
 - a) Godly sorrow moves one to repent. This is sorrow that arises from our view of sin agreeing with God’s view. Godly sorrow produces permanent transformation.
 - b) Worldly sorrow produces remorse, and this does not always lead to God. People can be grieved over the consequences but they do not look to God for forgiveness and transform themselves. This sorrow produces eternal death.
- C. It involves the will.
 - 1. The most prominent element in repentance is the will. God will accept no external substitute for the necessary internal change.
 - 2. Sackcloth for the body and remorse for the soul are not to be confused with a determined abandonment of sin (Psalm 51:17; Hosea 6:6).
 - 3. The will and disposition in repentance is seen:
 - a) In the confession of sin to God (Psalm 38:18; Luke 15:21; 18:13).
 - b) In the forsaking of sin (Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 3:8-10).
 - c) In turning to God (Acts 26:17-18; 1 Thessalonians 1:9).

III. How Repentance Is Produced

- A. Repentance is a gift.
 - 1. Repentance does not originate within man. It is a divine gift (Acts 5:30-31; 11:18). The gospel gives all of us the power, opportunity, and privilege of repenting.

2. The gospel that calls for repentance also produces it (Jonah 3:5-10). The rich man mistakenly thought there was more to bring people to repentance (Luke 16:27-31).
- B. Repentance is brought about by considering the judgment of God.
1. In Matthew 11:20-22, the Lord scolded three cities because of their lack of repentance, and then appealed to the terrors of judgment to induce them to repent.
 2. When Jonah went into Nineveh to preach to them, he brought the whole city to sackcloth and ashes (Jonah 3:4).
 3. When Paul stood before the philosophers in Athens, he preached judgment if they did not repent (Acts 17:30-31; cp. Romans 2:16; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
- C. Repentance is brought about by considering the goodness of God.
1. Paul, in Romans 2:4-5, rebuked certain men for treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the judgment of God.
 2. If a sinner were to reflect on the kindness of the God who is opening the gates to eternity of glory and honor, would he not despise himself for what he has done?
- D. Repentance is brought about by the loving reproof of a Christian.
1. I would hope if I were in sin, someone would tell me the serious truth about the path I had chosen (2 Timothy 2:24-26).
 2. The appeal to repent should always be made, not with "I feel" or "I think so," but with the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

IV. The Results Of Repentance

- A. All heaven is made glad.
1. When a sinner repents, there is joy in heaven and in the presence of the angels of God (Luke 15:7, 10).
 2. All the heavenly beings know the value of man's soul and know what happens in eternal death (Matthew 16:26).
- B. Pardon and forgiveness of sins is given.
1. Outside of repentance the prophets and apostles know of no other way of securing pardon (Isaiah 55:7; Acts 3:19).
 2. Repentance, in conjunction with obedience, qualifies a sinner for forgiveness and eternal life (Acts 2:38).

Conclusion. The people of Capernaum were being judged harshly because they refused to repent under the preaching of the Son of God, while a prophet of God went to a heathen country and convinced them to repent (Matthew 11:24). You may be here and are refusing to repent under the preaching of the Son of God. Just because I am the one standing before you delivering the message does not mean the message has less power. Are you

willing to die that way? There is hope for you only in responsiveness to the simple terms of the gospel. Will you repent and turn from your sins today?