

Repent or Perish

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Old-Fashioned Doctrine of Repentance, though much Neglected, is still in the Bible!

"Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:2-5.)

Millions of people confuse repentance with penance, a Romish invention, entirely foreign to the Bible. Many others confuse repentance with penitence or sorrow for sin, so that even Webster's dictionary, following common usage, wrongly defines repentance as "contrition for sins with amendment of life." Most Protestants today, and modernistic Baptists along with them, either ignore the doctrine of repentance or explain it away as nothing more than a momentary "decision for Christ."

1. DEFINITION of Repentance. If we accept the English words "repent" and "repentance" as translations of Greek "*metanoeo*" and "*metanoia*," respectively, it will not be hard to learn the New Testament meaning of these words. Even a reader who knows no Greek can easily check the information given here by reference to the *Englishman's Greek Concordance* or to Young's *Analytical Concordance*.

The question is confused a little for the English reader of the common, version because the same words "repent," "not to be repented of," and "without repentance" are misused for the Greek "*metamelomai*" and "*ametameletos*" which could better be translated by forms of English "regret"

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is sometimes defined as "a change of mind." The trouble with this definition is that it in turn can easily be misunderstood. Bible repentance is not a mere change of mind in the sense of momentary opinion or desire, as if a man should order pork chops for dinner and then, seeing his neighbor with an appetizing steak, "change his mind" and order a steak for himself. Rather, **repentance is a change of mind in the sense of fundamental conceptions and attitudes**, such as those Americans who now trust the promises of atheistic Communists and want to do business with Russia will experience when the bombs begin to fall on our cities - if they live long enough to learn from the disaster.

"Repent," as stated above, is English for Greek "*metanoeo*." This word, to turn, is a compound of "*noeo*," meaning "think," "understand," or "be minded" and the prefix "*meta*" which may mean "after" and often denotes a change. Thus the word could be rendered "think again" or "have a different mind."

The simple verb "*noeo*" appears 14 times in the Greek New Testament. The King James translators rendered it ten times "understand," twice "perceive," once "think," and once "consider." Thus the compound "*metanoeo*," "repent," might well be rendered, "have a different understanding."

2. REPENTANCE and Faith. A right understanding of repentance will save us from the erroneous idea that faith is something separate and apart from repentance, and from the false teaching that saving faith precedes repentance. When the Scriptures mention repentance and faith together, the order is "repent and believe," never "believe and repent."

REPENT AND BELIEVE

The reason for the scriptural order is obvious. The natural mind is incapable of saving faith. But when a man has a changed mind, a spiritual mind, even the mind of Christ, then he believes God's word, he agrees with God's judgment upon him, he accepts God's provision for him in Christ - and this is saving faith.

As repentance is a radical change of mind from unbelief to belief, so faith is the attitude of the mind changed. This is why repentance and faith have been described as inseparable graces. And this is why in the Scriptures we usually find either word used without mention of the other, since either word necessarily implies the other.

3. COMMAND to Repentance. "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will Judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31.)

ALL MUST REPENT

It might be supposed that only exceptional sinners would be called on to repent, but not so. God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Repentance is not merely a desirable change of mental conceptions and attitudes; it is an imperative change - a direct command of God.

Not only lost sinners but Christians are commanded to repent when they have sinned. In Revelation 2 and 3 we read letters from Jesus to seven churches. Five letters out of the seven contain calls to repentance. Not to lost sinners, but to the church at Corinth, Paul wrote:

"Though I made you sorry in the letter, I do not regret, even if I did regret; for I perceive that that letter, even if for an hour, made you sorry. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage from us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be regretted: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (II Corinthians 7:8-10, corrected translation.)

4. NEED of Repentance. To be acceptable to God, man must have a changed mind because the mind with which he was born in the flesh is at enmity against God and cannot receive the things of God.

In Noah's day "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5.)

David by inspiration declared: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts." (Psalm 10:4.)

Paul tells us that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Corinthians 2:14.)

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:7-8.)

A SOUND MIND

False religions may drive people crazy, or crazy people may have false religions, but not so with the true religion of Jesus Christ. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." II Timothy 1:7.)

Sometimes it may be a matter of opinion as to who is sane and who is insane, but we need have no doubts if we accept the word of God, for the inspired apostle assures us that "we have the mind of Christ." (I Corinthians 2:16.)

5. Repentance From and Toward. As repentance is a change of mental attitude, it must be from one attitude to another. And so we find:

Repentance is from sins: "I gave her time that she might repent from her fornication." (Revelation 2:21, corrected translation)

"And the rest of the men, who were not killed in these plagues, did not even repent from the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood: which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. And they did not repent from their murders, or from their sorceries, or from their fornications or from their thefts." (Revelation 9:20-21, corrected trans.)

FROM DEAD WORKS TO GOD

Repentance is from dead works: "The foundation of repentance from, dead works." (Hebrews 6:1.) "Dead works" are the outwardly good deeds that sinners do in trying to establish their own righteousness. The sinner must give up trying to save himself before he can be saved by Christ

Repentance is toward God: "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21.) In repentance the mind that was once disobedient and rebellious becomes reconciled to God.

6. ALTERNATIVE to Repentance. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3.) Human nature has not changed. In the days when Jesus walked upon this earth, people liked to point to the calamities of others as visitations of divine justice. Jesus declared that these were only examples of greater judgments to come upon all who fail to repent.

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

The sinner who does not repent will perish not merely in this life, but to eternity: "These shall go

away into everlasting punishment." (Matthew 25:46.) "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction," (II Thessalonians 1:9.)

Mark gives us these words from the lips of Jesus Himself: "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:43-44.)

We are reminded of Isaiah's prophecy: "As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." (Isaiah 66:22-24.)

REPENT OR PERISH!

7. CONCLUSION. God's word is sure and will certainly come to pass. He is not a man that He should lie or repent if we are in disagreement with Him, the only way we can become agreed with Him is for us to change, for He changes not.

God "NOW commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Not tomorrow or any other time but "NOW is the day of salvation." (II Corinthians 6:2.)

If you are not yet saved by His grace, may God now grant you "repentance nnto life." (Acts 11:18.)

-From *Ashland Avenue Baptist* paper, Apri, 27, 1973.