

HAVE YOU REPENTED THAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE?

By Curtis Pugh

If we would understand the nature of gospel repentance we must consider what the Bible says about it. We must understand the importance of repentance. We must understand the order in which it occurs. And we must understand that which produces it in the sinner. Only then can we look at our own personal experience and judge whether we have experienced true biblical repentance.

The importance of repentance is seen from the very first preaching of John the Baptist and of the Lord Jesus Himself. Both preached **“Repent”** as seen in Matthew 3:2 and 4:17. The message of the first disciples whom the Lord Jesus sent out to preach is recorded for us. Matthew 6:12 says, **“And they went out, and preached that men should repent.”** The Lord's words to certain Jews were, **“... except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,”** (Luke 13:3). Paul preached that God **“...now commandeth all men every where to repent,”** (Acts 17:30). Gospel repentance, then, is necessary in order to be saved.

Why is it necessary to understand the order in which repentance comes? Some think that faith comes before repentance. This, however, reduces faith to a mere intellectual acceptance of facts. Jesus spoke of certain people who rejected John's preaching. He said, **“For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him,”** (Matthew 21:32). Notice that repentance is stated to be necessary in order to believe! Thus repentance precedes faith. Paul in recounting his mission work stated that he went everywhere, **“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,”** (Acts 20:21). Every place in the New Testament where repentance and faith are mentioned together, repentance is always placed first because it comes first. This turning to God is not produced by a mere intellectual faith or agreement with the teaching of the Bible.

True gospel or evangelical repentance is produced by a heart that has been broken over sin. The Bible makes this clear in 2 Corinthians 7:10 which says, **“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”** It is wrong to think that a mere intellectual decision is sufficient. It is wrong to think that a mere mental agreement with the facts of the gospel is true justifying faith. Salvation is an experience that includes a broken heart over sin which produces a turning to God. This turning to God or repentance means that the individual takes his rightful place before God as a sinner without hope except for the finished work of Christ, God's Lamb. Trust not in your own works, your baptism, your prayer, your own goodness or anything other than in Jesus Christ and His finished work. This is the faith that follows true repentance which follows a broken heart over personal sin.