



Sunday, February 19, 2017
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Introduction to the Doctrine of Repentance

The most important question we have to wrestle with as human beings is, “what must I do to be saved?” Considering the situation in which we find ourselves, as sinners who are accountable to a holy God, getting the answer right or wrong is a matter of life and death. So we must proceed with seriousness and humility—examining ourselves to see if these things are true of us...

[In using this sermon guide, please remember that, as always, the Word of God is what’s most important, so please be sure to look up the Biblical references and reflect on their meaning.]

What must I do to be saved?

Answer: Repent and believe, becoming a faithful follower of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 16:30; 20:21; Matt. 10:37-39; 28:18-20 [remember that ‘disciple’ is a synonym for ‘follower’]; John 21:19, 22; Acts 11:26)

I. The Necessity of Repentance

Jesus: “**repent or perish**” (Luke 13:5)

The apostle Paul: “**I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus**” (Acts 20:21) “**First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds**” (Acts 26:20)

“There is not one verse of Scripture that indicates you can be a Christian and live any kind of a life you want to. When Christ enters into the human heart, He demands that He be Lord and Master. He demands complete surrender... He must have first place in everything you do or think or say, for when you truly repent you turn toward God in everything...” – Billy Graham, *Peace with God*

II. The Nature of Repentance

Jesus offers the Ninevites as an example of repentance (compare Matt. 12:41 with Jonah 3:5-10)

To repent is to so profoundly change your mind/heart that you trust Christ alone for your salvation and you begin to follow Him as Lord.

“[To repent] means a great deal more than just regretting and feeling sorry about sin. The biblical word repent means ‘to change, to turn.’ It is a word of power and action. It is a word that signifies a complete revolution in the individual... When the Bible calls upon us to repent of sin, it means that we should turn away from sin, that we should do an about-face and walk in the opposite direction from sin and all that it implies... True repentance means ‘to change, to turn away from, to go in a new direction.’” – Billy Graham, *Peace with God*

“In repentance a sinner—seeing and sensing not only the danger but also the filthiness and hatefulness of his sins, because they are contrary to God’s holy nature and His righteous law, and upon realizing that God promises mercy in Christ to those who repent—does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it to God, and determines and endeavors to walk with God in all the ways that He commands.” – adapted from the Baptist Catechism

“Repentance consists in a radical transformation of thought, attitude, outlook, and direction...repentance is a turning from sin unto God and His service.” – *New Bible Dictionary*

“Repentance calls for total surrender, total commitment to the will of God...It embraces the whole walk of the new man who is claimed by the divine lordship. It carries with it the founding of a new personal relation of man to God...It awakens joyous obedience for a life according to God’s will.” – *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

“The New Testament word for repentance means changing one’s mind so that one’s views, values, goals, and ways are changed and one’s whole life is lived differently. The change is radical, both inwardly and outwardly; mind and judgment, will and affections, behavior and life-style, motives and purposes, are all involved.

Repenting means starting to live a new life.” – J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*

Repentance, a function of faith, is a remorseful reversing of one’s previous self-centered, sin-serving habits and actions and turning to Christ to become His faithful and obedient follower, practicing repentance and pursuing holiness as a lifelong project.” – J.I. Packer

“He is in fact ‘our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’ (2 Pet. 3:18), and we have no liberty to cut Him in two, responding to one half and rejecting the other. He offers us salvation (forgiveness and the liberating power of the Spirit); He demands our thoughtful and total allegiance. For when Jesus is truly Lord, He directs our lives and we gladly obey Him. Indeed, we bring every part of our lives under His lordship—our home and family, our sexuality and marriage, our job or unemployment, our money and possessions, our ambitions and recreations.” – John Stott, *Christian Basics*

Being a Christian means becoming Christ’s disciple, and ‘disciple’ means ‘follower’ (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 14:25-33; John 21:19-22; Acts 11:26; Rom. 6:17)

“With good intentions and sincere desires to reach as many people as possible for Jesus, we have subtly and deceptively minimized the magnitude of what it means to follow Him. We’ve replaced challenging words from Christ with trite phrases in the church. We’ve taken the lifeblood out of Christianity and put Kool-Aid in its place so that it tastes better to the crowds, and the consequences are catastrophic. Multitudes of men and women at this moment think that they are saved from their sins when they are not. Scores of people around the world culturally think that they are Christians when biblically they are not.” – David Platt, *Follow Me*

III. How Repentance Happens

Repentance happens through the convicting, convincing work of the Spirit through the Word (John 16:8-11; Acts 2:36-38; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; 10:17)

“What happens then, in a true conversion, is that faith comes to life in the mind as the reality of the truths about Christ (whether they have been read or heard) begin to take life and to be felt. In some shape or form, these truths center on God’s holiness and love, Christ’s self-giving for us and in our place on the cross, His triumph over sin, death, and the devil, and our sense of corruption, guilt, misery, and despair.”

“Then we hear the words of grace in the gospel. Emotions may well be stirred, for although the perception of spiritual reality is not itself emotional, distress, fear, shame, and hopeful joy are at different times the result of coming to realize the truth of the gospel. Faith, beginning as this knowledge [this real understanding of the truths of the Christian faith] blossoms into assent in which the will is now engaged; assent issues into heartfelt trust and from this trust flows real repentance and the turning from sin to Christ.” – David Wells, *Turning to God*

Recommended Resources

Christianity Explored – a study in the Gospel of Mark

Two Ways to Live: The Choice We All Face – a series of resources put out by Matthias Media

Basic Christianity by John Stott

Right Side Up by Paul Grimmond

Discuss

- 1) Have you considered repentance to be an essential part of the Christian life or have you considered it more of an optional, “next level” form of Christianity? When did you come to this understanding?
- 2) How can you know if you have repented? What about other people?
- 3) Is there a need for on-going repentance in the Christian life? Why or why not?
- 4) It can be difficult to share the gospel with someone who is not a Christian—even more difficult to get to the part about our need to repent. Why is it so hard to talk about these things? Why do we have such a hard time with it?
- 5) Who are some people that you interact with regularly with whom you could share the good news about Jesus and the truth that they need to repent in order to be saved by Him?