



THE CHALLENGER

Our WEB address: thehourofgraceandpower.org

Vol. 38 No. 6

PROCLAIMING THE WORD TO THE WORLD

June 2009

DOCTRINAL SERIES IV

Repentance

BY THE EDITOR

UNDER the title of “redemption” is included *repentance, justification, propitiation, and reconciliation*. Repentance is defined in four words, “a change of mind.” It includes conviction, confession, restitution, and conversion. In the grace of God is given us a godly sorrow for our sin that generates a turning away from it. Here is a very important fact. Along with faith, God gives us repentance. “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to GIVE repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles GRANTED repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). A sinner cannot face his sin in the light of God’s Word and not be deeply troubled by it. Just to confess you are a sin-

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; But is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”

ner is insufficient. We are the sinner God states in His Word. We are headed for hell for sure until God brings sorrow into our life in the realization of our action and mental attitude. “For ye were made sorry after a godly manner” (II Corinthians 7:9).

The Bible is full of this doctrine. Christ included it in the Great Commission. He commanded that repentance should be preached in His name. (Luke 24:47) John the Baptizer and Christ Himself spoke of the work of repentance. Christ declared perishing in hell independent of repentance. (Luke 13:3,5) It was a vital part of Peter’s pentecostal message. (Acts 2:37-39) Repentance was the message of the early church. “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, REPENTANCE TOWARD God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20,21). Here is a verse among others that forever separates repentance from faith. Both are available as gifts and can only be accepted and acted upon. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; But is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to REPENTANCE” (II Peter 3:9). “At the time of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to REPENT” (Acts 17:30).

Significance of Repentance

It is interesting how many ministers leave this doctrine out of their messages. It is seldom noted in printed messages and left out of gospel tracts and devotional reading. I wonder why? The Puritan writers made it a vital part of almost every message. How can God help a person who refuses to acknowledge his need of divine intervention? One main reason for this lack of presentation today is the lack of desire of sinners to face their own sin. Most preachers are inclined to maintain their popularity by serving up what his people desire. They do not want to face this piercing, scalding, condemnation by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word. An easy way out of such presentation is to say all we need is faith. Repentance is one side of the coin of faith. That is the statement of mere men, not Scripture. Friend, just because God’s Word mentions them separately, one or the other, that does not exclude the other. They both are presented together in your Bible. You would not forget the earlier part of this dissertation, would you? The first thing we face in our way to being saved is our sin. Honest confession does not come easy for the sinner, so God uses the Holy Spirit to make us conscious of its damnation. “And when He (Holy Spirit) is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). Toward the sunset of my preaching I have much to thank God for. From the very beginning, God gave me a clear revelation through His Word of the scathing denunciation of sin and its consequences. Sin is our problem. Many people conclude that faith in Christ is our greatest challenge. Faith is easily com-

(continued on page 2)

Repentance (continued from page 1)

municated to an acknowledged, damned hell-bent sinner. Remember why Christ died. It was to take away our sin. After repentance, how easy it is to cry out to Christ for His power over sin. I have observed down through the years that a truly repentant sinner does not have a sin problem during his Christian life. When sin is removed, the blessed Holy Spirit moves into our being to equip us to be a living testimony before the sinners around us. Our actions in a changed life is the greatest proof that we are in God's family. (Romans 6:11) It is the living Christ we serve, for we are no longer dead in trespasses and sin. (Ephesians 2:1) Do you possess such joy, delight, and contentment?

Significance in the Scriptures

The word "REPENT" is listed 45 times in the Old Testament. We find it nearly 600 times in the New Testament. Hear the Psalmist declare repentance: "I thought on my ways (halt). I turned my feet unto thy testimonies (right about turn). I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments (quick forward march to definite action)" (Psalm 119:59,60). Repentance means to go the opposite way and do the opposite thing, based upon deep sorrow of heart and remorse for our personal sins with abhorrence of that which is hated by a holy God.

There are three Greek words for repentance: METANAEIO means to change one's mind, always for the better, and leads to a change of life. It is a mighty change of mind and heart wrought by the Spirit of God. This word is in the imperative, a definite command. (Matthew 3:2, 4:17; Acts 2:36-38, 3:19). METAMELOMAI means regret. This is an after-sorrow word and is listed five times. It is not a saving repentance. (II Corinthians 7:9,10) METANOAI means a real change of mind and attitude toward sin itself, and the cause of it. It means a change in our principle of action from what is by nature the exact opposite. It is connected with the remission of sin and the promise of salvation. It is interesting to note that in the Old Testament it is listed 65 times denoting comfort. When a sinner repents, turns to God through Christ, he is sure to be comforted by the change in His relationship with Him. What glorious days are ahead of him, not to mention eternity.

Near the end of a radio tape being made with my father, I mentioned that he really believed that a sinner must repent, for his message included repentance. He replied, "Well, son, it is not only biblical truth, but it is the only action that really works. When I see a person truly repenting of his sin, I see a genuine conversion as he accepts Christ as Savior and Lord. He bears fruit from that repentance and faith."

Source of Repentance

Salvation does not come through some penitential act or meritorious work, but only as a free gift from God. Strange as it may seem, repentance is not produced by the threats of divine wrath and judgment, but by the goodness of God. (Romans 2:4, Jonah 2:4) It is not the work of an unbelieving man; it comes as a gift from the risen Savior and God. (Acts 5:31,11:18; II Timothy 2:25) and is wrapped up in saving grace. (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8,9) Remember, repentance is always tied to faith. (Acts 20:20) They are inseparable. Both are necessary to salvation. (Mark 1:15, Luke 16:30,31) If Christ is accepted by faith, then a biblical repentance has been experienced. It is not always known or understood by the sinner prior to or after his conversion. By grace, he was given sorrow for his sin.

When talking with people at the time of their conversion, I often heard what a terrible sinner they have been. (I take real courage.) There and then I see the beginning of a new life in Christ. At the close of my sermons in a Baptist church in South Miami, I instructed that I wanted to talk personally to everyone who came forward at the close of the service. I heard it again from a young lady: "I have been a terrible sinner." She had heard a few of my messages about sin. That young lady went off to Bible school, married, and, eventually, went to the mission field.

No matter how black a person's sins may be, God's pardon is on the basis of repentance. In the Book of Revelation we have a divine call from Christ for His Church to repent. The seven churches described in Revelation 2 and 3 present different phases of church history, and over and over they were instructed to repent. Often the preaching of repentance is ineffectual because it is too general. Specific sins that weigh on the conscience should be confessed, forsaken, and forgiveness sought. Name some of your sins when repenting. Name your present sins. Talk direct to God in prayer. The blood of Christ cleanses from ALL sin on the basis of our fellowship with Him. (I John 1:7)

One of the greatest examples in the Bible of a man who repented was the prodigal son. What did he do after recognizing his position in the pig pen? He confessed his deserved position and returned to his father, not knowing of his forgiveness and joy upon his arrival. "And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no more worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:17-19).

Only God has given us the full story of sin. It entered the human heart through Adam. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." But praise be to God! "So by the obedience of one (the Lord Jesus Christ), shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). The gift of God has provided for us eternal fellowship with Himself. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). We Christians are classified as saints, holy people. We must be so to have fellowship with a holy God. Do you have the consciousness of sin within you? Confess it now. Repent of it now. As Christians we have a glorious promise: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Why not let me be the first to hear of your repentance toward God and faith in His Son? What joy to my heart to hear your testimony of God's faithfulness.



