

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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Repentance

Repentance plays a major role in the salvation of the soul. There are numerous passages that speak of the absolute necessity of repentance in order for a sinner to get back into a right relationship with God. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness of sins. The reason this is so is because we serve a God Who is righteous and Who by nature cannot tolerate sin. John once wrote, *"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all"* (1 John 1:5).

What Is Repentance?

Since repentance is so vital to our relationship with God, let's make sure we know what it is. Someone says, "To repent means to turn our life around." Not exactly. It is true that genuine repentance will result in lives being changed or turned around, but the turning is not repentance, it is reformation. Certain sinful behavior can be stopped without true repentance taking place. A man who is thrown into prison will obviously have a change of lifestyle and quit doing whatever it is that landed him in prison, but he hasn't repented. So what is repentance? Thayer says that repentance means *"to change one's mind"* (Thayer's Greek Lexicon). Vine has the following: *"to perceive afterwards" (meta, "after," implying "change," noeo, "to perceive"; nous, "the mind, the seat of moral reflection"), in contrast to pronoeo, "to perceive beforehand," hence signifies "to change one's mind or purpose," always, in the NT, involving a change for the better"* (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words). And Strong has, *"to think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider"* (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary).

True repentance has to do with having a changed of heart. Jesus exemplified this in his illustration of the disobedient son in Matthew 21:28-29:

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went."

Notice that the repentance and the "going" were two different actions. Repentance was the son's change of mind. He considered the situation and started to think differently about what his father instructed him to do. Once he changed his mind, he went. The distinction between repentance and reformation is seen in the words of John the Baptist in Matthew 3:8 when He told the Pharisees and Sadducees to not only repent (have a change of mind), but to bring forth fruit meet for repentance (change of action).

Why is this distinction important to understand? It is important because the condition of a man's heart is important. People who are in sin will not truly turn to the Lord until they have experienced genuine repentance, that is, a true change of heart. Members of the church, who are wishy-washy in their service to God, won't change for good until they start thinking differently about God

and sin. Unbelievers, who come to Christ in faith and obedience, only remain faithful if they have truly come to perceive sin as deplorable and God as the Supreme Being who deserves to be obeyed in everything. When that kind of repentance takes place, the life of the person will truly be changed, not temporarily, but permanently, unless, of course, he changes his mind again and goes back to a carnal kind of thinking.

I constantly see two kinds of people responding to the invitation of Christ. First, the one who comes forward to be baptized or to confess sin because of an emotional surge of some kind, and ends up back in the world in a short period, or who needs to be constantly badgered about coming to services and putting God first. This is a person who probably has not had a true change of heart. Then, I see people whose lives are truly transformed. They are almost unrecognizable because the old man has been put away, and they have become a new creature in Christ. They have repented. They have made up in their mind that they will leave sin behind and serve God with all their heart, soul and mind.

Have you truly repented? If you are in any kind of sin, you need to change. But if that change is to be real and lasting, you must first have a genuine change of mind toward sin. As Peter once said, *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”* Acts 3:19).

Don

Forget Not All His Benefits

An elderly widow and widower were dating for about five years. The man finally decided to ask her to marry. She immediately said “yes”.

The next morning when he awoke, he couldn’t remember what her answer was! *“Was she happy? I think so, wait, no, she looked at me funny...”*

After about an hour of trying to remember to no avail, he got on the telephone and gave her a call. Embarrassed, he admitted that he didn’t remember her answer to the marriage proposal.

“Oh”, she said, “I’m so glad you called. I remembered saying ‘yes’ to someone, but I couldn’t remember who it was.”

How could a person possibly forget something so important?! Unfortunately, I know the answer to that question all too well. It’s not that I forgot that I’m married to what’s-her-name. No, my problem is much more common than that. I forget to thank God for the many blessings that He has showered on me. In fact, sometimes I forget to even recognize those blessings.

The words of David speak to us all:

“Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things...” (Psalm 103:1-5a)

Forgetting to see the goodness and blessings of God is so easy to do. But remembering to thank Him every day for them is even easier...if we just practice. Why not take just a few minutes out of our busy schedule every day; take a look around; and pause to thank God for not forgetting us.

—unknown Author