

Repentance and Faith

Introduction:

Repentance and faith belong to the human side of salvation in that they are man's response to the preaching of the Word of God.

Repentance is the negative aspect of that response — a turning from sin; faith is the positive aspect — a turning to Christ. The Gospel invokes both in a saving response to God. Gospel preaching ought to seek both in the lives of men and women.

I. The Place of Repentance in the Word of God

Repentance is an integral part of the Gospel message. It was the message of the very first Gospel preacher, John the Baptist — Matthew 3:1-2, 8; it was preached by the Savior Himself — Matthew 4:17; and the apostles — Mark 6:12; Acts 2:38; 26:20.

Repentance is the 'kernel' of the Great Commission — Luke 24:47. A gospel message cannot be complete without a call for true repentance. Today's "easy-believism" — 'Hollywood Christianity' — lays little, if any, stress upon this aspect. Hence we have the spectacle of 'Christians' producing worldly music, sleazy movies, etc.

A. God Counts Repentance Important — II Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30

B. Salvation Depends on Repentance — Luke 13:3, 5; James 5:20

II. The Meaning of "Repentance"

A. Repentance is not Remorse.

People often associate repentance with uncontrollable weeping and outward shows of sorrow. This may not necessarily mean true repentance, as in the case of Esau — Hebrews 12:16-17.

Many times people show a "sorrow at being caught," a regret over the consequences of sin. This is not repentance, but remorse.

II Corinthians 7:10 distinguishes true and false repentance:

Repentance = Godly Sorrow

Remorse = World Sorrow

B. Repentance is a Change of Mind.

The Greek word translated 'repentance' ("*mentanoeo*") literally means "a change of mind."

True Bible repentance may or may not involve an outward show of emotions — but it always involves a change of heart, a change of mind, or attitude. See: Matthew 21:29

Repentance essentially involves a change in our attitude to:

1. Sin

Whereas in the past the sinner would live in sin, often enjoying its pleasures — he would now see it in all its ugliness and hideousness, as God sees it. He now hates and detests sin — Psalm 97:10; has a real sorrow over sins committed — Psalm 38:18; and a broken heart because of his sinfulness — Psalm 51:17.

2. God

Whereas once the sinner despised God, or had little regard for the work of Christ, he now sees Christ as his only hope for salvation.

III. The Work of God in Repentance

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Man will not naturally repent. It is the Holy Spirit Who works in the heart of man to produce an inclination to this change. In this sense, repentance is a gift of God — Acts 11:18.

- A. It is God's Will for Man to Repent. — II Peter 3:9
- B. It is Accomplished through various means.
 - 1. Through the Preaching of the Word of God.
This is the primary means by which God brings man to the place of repentance. It is the Word of God which best reveals to man his true condition and the folly of sin. The Bible will bring a man to the realization of God's holiness and his own sinfulness — Acts 2:37-40.
 - 2. Through the Goodness of God.
Romans 2:4
 - 3. Through Chastisement and Church Discipline
II Corinthians 7:8-11; Revelation 3:19

Christians need to repent too!

IV. The Fruits of Repentance

Whilst repentance is an inward action, it has outward results. John the Baptist would not baptize anyone unless they showed "fruits meet for repentance" — Matthew 3:8.

The outward results of true Bible repentance are:

- A. A Confession of Sin to God. — Psalm 32:3-5; Matthew 3:6; Luke 18:13
- B. A Confession of Faults to Men. — Luke 19:8-9; James 5:16
- C. A Forsaking of Sin. — Proverbs 28:13; I Peter 3:10-11

True Repentance leads to a changed life thus being seen synonymous with conversion.

V. The Results of Repentance

- A. Joy in Heaven. — Luke 15:7, 10
- B. Pardon and Forgiveness. — Isaiah 55:7
- C. The Gift of the Holy Spirit (Salvation). — Acts 2:38
- D. Life. — Psalm 34:18; Isaiah 66:2; Ezekiel 18:21
- E. Answer Prayer. — II Chronicles 7:14

VI. The Place of Faith in the Word of God.

Faith is the "operative" word in the Christian's life, for, "the just shall live by faith." — Romans 1:17; II Corinthians 5:7.

A study of the Bible shows that we are saved through faith — Ephesians 2:8; we live by faith — Galatians 2:20; and we are kept through faith — I Peter 1:5.

The word faith is also used in connection with the whole body of Scriptural doctrine — expressed as "the faith" — Jude 3.

VII. The Meaning of Faith

Faith may be simply defined by the following acrostic:

- F — orgetting
- A — ll
- I — mpossibilities

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T — rusting
H — im

A. Faith is NOT Mental Assent.

A belief in something is not faith. A person may believe all the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God and still be lost. Such a 'belief' is static — real faith is active.

Note: A man may believe a certain chair will comfortably support him — that's mental assent. Until he puts that belief to the test and actually sits on the chair he has not exercised faith.

Note: This fact is the general thrust of James chapter 2. A faith which is not active is dead.

B. Faith is NOT Foolishness.

Faith is not a "Jump in the dark." It is based upon facts.

Faith is to believe these facts and to act upon them.

Faith is the "substance" of things hoped for — Hebrews 11:1. What is it that we hope for? Eternal life — Titus 1:2. Notice that our hope is certain and sure because it is based upon the Word of God (not the word of man)! Believing God is the 'smartest' thing we can do.

C. Faith is NOT Feelings.

Many today want to "feel" saved, and seek a religious experience. This is not faith because it seeks to rest in the tangible — not the things hoped for.

God's way in salvation has always been...

FACT → FAITH → FEELINGS

D. Faith is NOT Embracing a Creed.

No one is saved because they can say, "I belong to a certain faith."

E. Faith IS Believing God's Word and Acting Upon It.

Faith is the "evidend of things not seen" — Hebrews 11:1. We have not seen:

1. The Creation of the the World.

No man was present when the "Sons of God shouted for joy" — Job 38:4-7.

See also: Hebrews 11:3

2. The Cross of Calvary.

Note: John 20:29

3. The New Jerusalem.

Why, then, do we believe these things are so? Because God said it, and faith believes what He says (the Word of God) is so. This is why the starting point of faith is Hebrews 11:6 — "...for he that cometh to God must believe that He is...". If a man can believe there is an all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing, all-wise God — he'll have no trouble believing anything He says.

"Faith is believing God's Word (James 2:19) and acting upon it (James 2:20)."

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VIII. The Nature of Saving Faith

The faith that saves is a personal appropriation of the work of Jesus Christ. This involves four things:

A. Knowledge.

This must come first. To be saved, we must KNOW that Christ died for our sins and that His blood will stand as complete payment for that sin — Psalm 9:10.

This knowledge comes from the Word of God, which is the BASIS of our faith — Romans 10:14, 17.

However, knowledge alone is not sufficient. — II Peter 2:21.

B. Assent.

This is an acknowledgement of the truth of God's Word — e.g. Matthew 16:16

Assent is not enough — Mark 12:28-34.

C. Conviction.

This is the persuasion that the facts assented to will achieve what they claim.

Even conviction is insufficient to save — Luke 18:23-26; Acts 24:25.

D. Appropriation.

This means to act upon the knowledge assented to.

Faith is the consent of the will to the assent of the understanding and the conviction of the heart.

- Knowledge affirms the fact of things.
- Assent accepts the surety of things.
- Conviction agrees to the reality of things.
- Appropriation actuates the surrender to these things.

"I read in the Bible that Christ died for sinners" — that's knowledge.

"I understand and believe it to be so that Christ will be accepted by God as payment for my sin" — that's assent.

"I am persuaded that if I trust Christ I will be saved" — that's conviction.

"I now act upon these facts and accept or trust Christ personally as by Savior as payment to God for my sin." — that's appropriation.

Note: II Timothy 1:12

"I know..."

"...whom I have believed..."

"...and am persuaded..."

"...which I have committed..."

Unfortunately, many today do not take the vital fourth step of appropriation.

Thus the distance between heaven and hell may be measured as about 15 inches — the distance from the head to the heart.

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IX. The Importance of Faith

- A. It Is the ONLY way to Please God. — Hebrews 11:6
- B. It is the ONLY way to Save Man. — John 3:36; Romans 1:17; Ephesians 2:8-9
- C. It is the ONLY way to Live Victoriously. — I John 5:4; I Peter 5:9