

Order of Salvation – All of Grace

Repentance

The subject of repentance is important. J.C. Ryle: “Repentance is one of the foundation stones of Christianity.... A mistake about repentance is a most dangerous mistake. An error about repentance is an error that lies at the very roots of our religion.” Why is it so important? 1) It is commanded of God (Acts 17:30). 2) Without repentance we will perish (Lk. 13:3,5). 3) It causes joy in heaven (Lk. 15:7,10).

Explanation of repentance

In its most simple and basic description, repentance is to turn from sin to God (1 Thess. 1:9). There are several biblical terms for repentance. The most common Old Testament word is “shub,” which pictures a change of direction. By nature, man is moving away from God, to the world and sin and heading straight for hell, but in repentance, he is completely turned about, and returns to God like the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15). The New Testament has two main words for repentance. One word has to do with a change of mind (metanoia). The other word has to do with a change of life (epistrofe). A change of mind will lead to a change of life.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism: “What is repentance unto life? Repentance unto life is a saving mercy, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after new obedience.”

The Heidelberg Catechism describes it as a sorrow of sin, hating of it, fleeing from it, and a joy of heart in God through Christ, and a desire to live wholeheartedly for Him in accordance with His commandments.

Experience of repentance

- 1) **True repentance sees its sin** (Lk. 15:17). We may be good at seeing the sins of others, while blind to our own sin. In repentance, a sinner comes to himself and sees himself “as a sinner and nothing but a sinner” (Thomas Watson).
- 2) **True repentance sorrows over sin** (Ps. 38:18; 51:3,17; Zech. 12:10; Lk. 7:38). Your heart is pained with sorrow because of how you sinned against a good-doing and holy God. “The heart bleeds for sin” (Thomas Watson). You are pained that you lived wickedly, mourn over time wasted, over talents misspent, what you have done to God, to others, and to yourself.
- 3) **True repentance confesses sin** (Neh. 9:2; Hos. 5:15; 2 Sam. 24:17; 1 Cor. 11:31). You feel you must speak to God against whom you have sinned, and accuse yourself before God (Ps. 32:5). How important confession is! It humbles us, gives glory to God (Josh. 7:19), endears Christ to the soul (Rom. 7:25), makes way for pardon (2 Sam. 12:13).

- 4) ***True repentance hates sin*** (Ez. 36:21). Thomas Watson: “a true penitent is a sin-loather. If a man loathes what makes him sick to his stomach, then he will much more loathe what makes his conscience sick. It is more to loathe sin than to leave it. One may leave sin out of fear, as when a plate and jewels are thrown overboard in a storm; but the nauseating and loathing of sin argues for detesting it. Christ is never loved till sin is loathed. Heaven is never longed for till sin is loathed.”
- 5) ***True repentance breaks with sin***. The wicked man forsakes his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts (Is. 55:7). This impacts our eyes, ears, mouths, feet, etc. J.C. Ryle: “What God commands he now desires to practice; and what God forbids he now desires to avoid. He strives in all ways to keep clear of sin, to fight with sin, to war with sin, to get the victory over sin. He ceases to do evil. He learns to do well. He breaks off sharply from bad ways and bad companions. He labors, however feebly, to live a new life.”
- 6) ***True repentance apprehends the mercy of God***. “Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved” (J. Newton). Conscious of his sin, crying out from the depths, believing that if God should mark iniquity he could not stand, but this is his hope: “With thee there is forgiveness... with the Lord is mercy and with him is plenteous redemption” (Ps. 130:4,7). Only when we turn away from looking at our sin and take refuge to God through Christ to find pardoning grace, do we begin to repent (Rom. 2:4).

Let us make sure that our repentance is a ***repentance of the*** _____ (Jo. 2:12). Let us make sure that in our repentance we ***turn to God***. Let us make sure that our repentance includes ***forsaking of sin***. Let us make sure that our repentance is linked ***to*** _____.

Encouragement to repentance

We are slow to give up sin and the world. Who wants to give up his right hand or his right eye? Plus habits die hard, and sin has a way of tightening its grip on us. And the fear of man brings a snare, and the power of pride can keep us from repentance. Therefore, here are encouragements to repentance:

- 1) What rich promises there are in the Bible (Pr. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:9; Is. 55:7).
- 2) What precious declarations there are in the Bible (Ez. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; Lk. 15:10).
- 3) What a gracious Saviour Christ is (Heb. 7:25; Matt. 9:13; Acts 5:31).

Discussion Questions

- 1) What are obstacles to repentance?
- 2) Why can faith and repentance not be separated in true conversion? What happens if you only focus on one and ignore the other?
- 3) Thomas Watson says: There are two special times when we must renew our repentance. Which are they and why?