

Marks of Genuine Repentance

Various Passages

1. Introduction.

- a. Last time in Luke we came to an abrupt passage of John the Baptist preaching repentance.
- b. We saw how John was concerned with the heart. He was an expositor of the soul, and revealed the corrupt nature of the heart to those desiring his baptism.
- c. As a result, I'm going to take some time to expand on the nature of repentance. Today, we'll begin with some marks of false repentance, and next time some marks of genuine repentance.
 - i. This is an unpopular topic, and one that's rarely talked about in any detail.
 - ii. When it is taught on, it is generally vague, or becomes psychologized to deal with issues of personal/emotional guilt.
 - iii. Furthermore, when repentance is taught on, people often disregard it as legalistic, or lacking grace.
 - iv. However, a true repentance will always produce fruits in keeping with repentance.
 1. We don't perform works of repentance to achieve forgiveness.
 2. Rather, a truly forgiven person will produce fruit that flows from a truly regenerate heart.
 3. The Bible has no category for a truly forgiven person that leads a fruitless life.
 4. True repentance has very little to do with what you profess, and everything to do with what your life will now produce. For as we saw, a bad tree can only bear bad fruit, and a good tree, good fruit. The fruit of your life simply manifests the nature of the inward person.

2. A New Testament Biblical Theology of Repentance.

- a. From John the Baptist to the churches in Revelation, repentance was the constant call of God.
 - i. Repentance was the first word and command of John the Baptist (Lk. 3:8).
 - 1. Remember, John comes before Jesus. As such, repentance must be the first step in true salvation.
 - 2. Since John is God's prophet, and John is the first prophet in 430 years, we should also understand that the message of repentance is also the first word of God. After 430 years of not speaking, God's silence is broken with the command to repent. And this is why repentance is so vital. It is always the first step in the process of true salvation.
 - ii. Repentance was the message of Peter to the Jews (Acts 3:19).
 - iii. Repentance was his message to Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:22).
 - iv. Repentance was the message of Paul to the Gentiles (Acts 17:26-30).
 - v. Repentance is the message which defined Paul's entire ministry. In the summary statement of his ministry, the clear theme is repentance (Acts 26:20).
 - vi. Repentance is the consist message to the churches in Revelation.
 - 1. Twice to Ephesus (2:5).
 - 2. Pergamum (2:16).
 - 3. Three times to Thyatira (2:21).
 - 4. Sardis (3:2).
 - 5. Laodicea (3:19).
- b. Repentance is the message that launched the church and brought it into being (Acts 2:38).
- c. Repentance was the definitive message of Jesus' preaching.

- i. Repentance was His first message when He began His formal ministry (Mk. 1:14), and it was His final word before His ascension (Lk. 24:46).
 - ii. Repentance was the content of his preaching during His ministry.
 - 1. Matt. 4:7.
 - 2. Matt. 11:17.
 - 3. Lk. 13:3, 5.
 - iii. Repentance was the message He commanded His disciples to preach (Mk. 6:11).
- d. Despite the sheer amount of data on this topic, and the obviously vital role of repentance, it's almost never talked about.
 - i. It's absent from most preaching today.
 - ii. It's absent from most Gospel presentations.
 - iii. It's absent from most evangelistic conversations.
 - iv. And yet, throughout the book of Acts, it's the one command that's always given after the Apostles preach Christ.
 - 1. The only other command that is given after the proclamation of Christ is Baptism.
 - 2. And yet, the command to be baptized is never alone. It's still given in conjunction with the command to repent (Acts 2:38).
- e. For these reasons (and more) the topic of repentance is essential.
 - i. Repentance is the reason for which God Himself says that He rejoices in heaven (Lk. 15:10).
 - ii. It's His great motivation for coming to seek and save that which was lost (Lk. 15).

3. Marks of False Repentance.

- a. Sorrow over the Temporary Effects/Consequences of Sin.

- i. There's a massive difference between sorrow/regret for the consequences of sin, and a hatred for sin itself.
- ii. Psalm 51:1-4.
 1. Despite the sad and difficult consequences of David's sins with the Bathsheba episode, his great sorrow is over the fact he sinned against God alone.
 2. He is pierced to the heart as a result of bringing a reproach against the name of God.
 - a. David understands sin to be a vertical reality.
 - b. What saddened David most, was not the devastation he brought to himself, or even other people, but to the pleasure of God.
- iii. A mark of false repentance is when a person becomes sorrowful over their sin, but only when they've been caught.
 1. They hate the guilt and shame.
 2. They regret that they've been found out.
 3. However, they're still not devastated by the presence of unrighteousness in their life, but that the unrighteousness has brought some negative consequences.
 4. True repentance is always a deep grief over the fact you've brought great offense to the name of God.
 5. The mark of a truly converted soul, and therefore a truly repentant heart, is that a person now delights in that which God delights, and hates that which God hates.
- b. Fear of God's Wrath and Eternal Judgment.
 - i. Fear can provoke sudden change when the threat of Hell looms large.
 1. However, behavioral modification, motivated by fear, is not the mark of true repentance.

2. Fear of God's wrath is far and away different from a love of God's Law.
 - a. Ps. 119:97.
 - b. Ps. 1:2.
- ii. Jas. 2:19.
- iii. A truly repentant person has a different motivation, namely, a true longing for the person of Christ.
 1. Quote : (Piper, John, *God Is The Gospel*, 15).
 2. Ps. 27:4.
 3. Ps. 63:1.
 4. Ps. 42:1.
 5. Phil. 1:23.
 6. 1Pet. 3:18.
- c. Penance as False Repentance.
 - i. Guilt is very common thing that most people feel. However, the Bible never speaks of the feeling of conviction/guilt over sin as a mark of true repentance. Rather, the conviction/guilt necessitates that we must repent. Sadly, many will experience the constant guilt, and yet never repent.
 - ii. Furthermore, many will feel they need to atone for their sin.
 1. People will run to religion, prayer, confessional, and give a lot of money.
 2. Protestants will work really hard at trying to pray away the conviction, or pray over and over again, to try and communicate to God how truly sorry they are for their sin. This is a form of protestant penance.
 - iii. On the other hand, there are many who like the conviction because it makes them feel like they're still saved.

1. Feelings of guilt make a person feel like they truly possess the Spirit of God.
2. Sadly, many who feel much conviction, still never evidence marks of true repentance.

d. Strong Theology and Understanding Right Things about God.

i. Jas. 2:19.

1. James is writing to Jewish Christians who are well acquainted with a good Theology Proper.
2. The Shema (Deut. 6:4-9).
3. Despite their good theology, James reveals that a truly repentant person is known by what they do. A right belief must inform their works, but belief without works is dead. True faith always bears fruit.

ii. Those who are unable to prove their faith by their works are deluded (Jas. 1:22).

1. The key reality behind false repentance is the presence of self-delusion.
2. Matt. 7:21-23.

4. Conclusion.

- a. These are broad principles.
- b. This is not an exhaustive list.
- c. Resist the temptation to view yourself as the exception. Rather, seek to do an honest examination of your own life.

Small Group Question

1. Talk about the place of sorrow in the life of a Christian. In what does a false repenter find sorrow? In what does a true repenter find sorrow—and why? To each person in the group, if you have sorrow or regret in your life, from what does this grief stem? In other words, are you evidencing false or true repentance in this area?
2. Talk about the inevitability of God's eternal judgment? How does this play into the conversation on false repentance? Is fear of Hell a sure sign of true repentance? Along this line, what drives each person in the group each day—a fear of hell, or a love of God's Law? Is Jesus simply the get out of Hell for free ticket, or is He truly the object of their affection?
3. In what ways do you try and make up for your sin? In other words, are there ways in which you try to atone for your own guilty conscience? Moreover, are you banking on the fact you feel convicted from time to time as the true evidence that you're a repentant sinner?
4. Does your desire to sit under good teaching, learn right theology, and debate doctrine evidence a true salvation? Do you find a false comfort of salvation because you attend MDF, or because you listen to other good Bible teachers?