

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE

Acts 17:30

INTRODUCTION

- From the beginning, Satan has sought to pervert the way of salvation through Jesus Christ
- Over the last 100 years, Satan has been successful in disseminating a gospel *without repentance*
- These false teachers may have everything else correct – man’s depravity, Christ’s deity, his substitutionary atonement, the requirement of faith in his blood – but by omitting the need for repentance, they present a false gospel that cannot save those who obey it; this is a damnable heresy (2 Peter 2:1)
- One such false teacher, Jack Hyles, stated that repentance is “the enemy of soul-winning”
- These antinomian heretics have sought to remove a Biblical condition of salvation in order to accumulate more “decisions” for Christ
- This has resulted in multitudes of professors who have repeated a “sinner’s prayer” in order to get to heaven, but have never known what godly sorrow for sin is, and have never experienced the grace of repentance in their hearts and lives
- In a desire to see more *decisions*, some have thought to make the conditions of salvation more appealing to sinners by dispensing with the need to turn from sin
- Then others have confused repentance with works, and in their zeal for *sola gratia* have likewise abandoned preaching repentance
- A simple definition of repentance is “a turning to God and a change of mind toward God that results in a change of life”
- Repentance is not sorrow, remorse, reformation or changing one’s life, but is a work of grace that completely transforms one’s heart and mind with regards to sin and God, and is evidenced by a changed life
- But before we consider precisely what repentance is according to the Scriptures, we must first seek to understand *why* this repentance is necessary at all
- God commands all men to repent, but what is the reason that God requires us to repent?

I. THE INFINITE HOLINESS OF GOD DEMANDS REPENTANCE

- A. His holiness is absolutely perfect, and incomparable to any of his creatures (Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2)
- B. His holy nature requires perfect holiness in those that would approach unto him
 - 1. The sacrificial system was instituted to enable a way for sinful man to be reconciled to God
 - 2. The Lord Jesus Christ offered himself to justify (declare righteous) sinners before God
 - 3. Only the contrite sinner, that confesses and turns from his sin, will be accepted by this holy God

II. THE SIN OF MAN DEMANDS REPENTANCE

- A. The fall of man brought sin into the human race
 - 1. Prior to the fall, man was righteous and had no need of repentance
 - a. It is not necessary to turn from sin where there is no sin
 - b. The Lord Jesus spoke of “just persons, which need no repentance” (Luke 15:7)
 - c. The holy angels of heaven need not repent
 - d. Jesus Christ did not need to repent
 - 2. When Adam and Eve sinned, their “eyes were opened”, their consciences came under conviction, and they knew they had sinned (Genesis 3:7)
 - 3. They responded as most people do today, by hiding from God, and attempting by their own efforts to cover their sin
 - 4. It was only when they were confronted with their true state and their inability to atone for their sin, that they could be forgiven and reconciled to God
 - 5. Implied in this account is a turning from their sin and their vain efforts to cover it, and receiving the only acceptable covering – that which came from a blood sacrifice (Genesis 3:21)
- B. The great evil of sin must be confronted

1. Sin is ultimately a declaration of rebellion our Creator
2. It rejects his sovereign right as King to govern me, his subject
3. Man thinks nothing of sin, but “drinketh iniquity like water” (Job 15:16)
4. If man thinks anything of sin, it is only in terms of how it affects *us*, not God
5. This “deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13), which hardens us against God, must be shattered by the Spirit and the word of God, to give us a true understanding of the “exceeding sinfulness” of sin (Romans 7:13)
6. The sinner who has come to this knowledge says, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Psalm 51:4)
7. The repentant sinner has a new view of sin – the sin that he once loved and cherished, he now hates and abhors, most of all because it is offensive to the God he now humbly looks to for mercy

C. In repentance, the *mind* must be changed

1. The Greek word for repentance (*metanoia*) is literally a change of mind
2. In our natural state, our minds are contrary to God – the carnal mind is enmity against God (Romans 8:7)
3. There is a wilful removal of God from man’s knowledge (Romans 1:21,28)
4. Hence the godless mind with its godless thoughts produces wicked behaviour (Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 15:19)
5. True repentance requires our evil minds to be completely transformed, which then transforms the whole life
6. Note the connection in Isaiah 55:6-9 between the evil *thoughts* and *ways*, both of which must be forsaken by the sinner when he returns to the LORD
7. “*Thus, genuine and saving repentance is a taking sides with God against myself*” (A W Pink)

III. THERE IS NO FORGIVENESS WITHOUT REPENTANCE

- A. God makes his forgiveness conditional on repentance

1. If the wicked turn not, God will destroy them (Psalm 7:11-13)
2. The option is two-fold: either repent and live; or continue in sin and perish (Ezekiel 33:11; Luke 13:3; 2 Peter 3:9)
3. The Great Commission as recorded by Luke is the preaching of "repentance and remission of sins" (Luke 24:47)

B. God is calling sinners who desire to be like him

1. It is absurd to claim that God receives those who have no love for him or righteousness, but only desire to continue in their rebellion and hatred of him
2. Christ died for sinners, not so they could continue in their sin, but that they may be saints
3. The antinomian rejects this, and turns the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 4)
4. *"But God requires, and requires justly, that the rebel shall throw down his arms. The Lord Jesus Christ is ready to pity, pardon, relieve, cleanse, wash, sanctify, and fit for heaven. But the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see a man hate the sins that he wishes to be forgiven. Let some people call this "legality" if they will. Let some call it "bondage" if they please. I take my stand on Scripture. The testimony of God's Word is plain and unmistakable. Justified people are always penitent people. Without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins."* (J C Ryle)

CONCLUSION

1. Have you come to a proper view of the infinite holiness of God as did the prophet Isaiah? (Isaiah 6:1-5)
2. Have you come to a true view of your vile and wicked state before this holy God?
3. Sin is a sickness that Christ came to heal, and he calls such sinners to repentance (Luke 5:30-32)
4. Sadly, most people love their sin too much to turn to God
5. Pray that God would grant you the gift of repentance unto life
6. *Now incline me to repent;
Let me now my fall lament;
Deeply my revolt deplore,
Weep, believe, and sin no more.*