

Except Ye Repent

By: Rodney Nulph, Associate Editor

Our Lord strongly warned, "...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3b). Repentance is clearly an individual matter, and no one is exempt from it (cf. Acts 17:30-31). Even in my limited experience, I have noticed that repentance is often misunderstood. Repentance is quite possibly the most difficult of all the commands of Jesus for one to obey. The late J.W. McGarvey astutely observed that, "The greatest obstacle to the salvation of men is the obstinacy of the human will" (97). Repentance must be understood and obeyed if we are ever to enter heaven.

Firstly, note the *explanation of repentance*. What is repentance? Simply explained, repentance is a change of mind brought about by godly sorrow, which results in the reformation of one's life. Repentance is not just being sorry (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10). Bible repentance is evident in one's life from a change in the fruit we produce (cf. Luke 3:8). **One cannot truly repent and continue in the same sin for which he professedly repented! One who biblically repents does not persist in sin** (Romans 6:1-2; Galatians 2:20).

Secondly, let's note some *examples of repentance*. When Israelites were convicted of taking unauthorized wives, they repented by "putting away" the sinful unions (Ezra 10:1 ff). Israel had godly sorrow, which led to a change of mind, which ultimately led to a change of life. When the prophet Jonah preached repentance to Nineveh, the people were made sorry that they had offended God (Jonah 3:5a), which led to their change of mind (John 3:5b-7a), which resulted in their change of lifestyle (Jonah 3:7b-10). When Paul preached to those in Ephesus, they were sorry for their sins, they changed their minds (Acts 19:18), which led to a change of lifestyle (Acts 19:19). They did not persist in using curious arts! Had they persisted in their witchcraft, they would not have biblically repented.

Lastly, consider the *encouragement to repent*. There are essentially two reasons that would cause one to be sorry for sin, change his or her mind, and change one's lifestyle. Both God's goodness and God's severity are encouraging reasons for one to repent (cf. Romans 2:4-6; 11:22). God's relentless patience, rich blessings and repeated mercies ought to drive us to penitent knees, where with tear-filled eyes, changed minds and reformed lives we begin again. God is so good, that you and I must leave our sinful ways and follow Him! However, if His goodness does not drive one to repent, then maybe His severity will bring about repentance. Each one will stand before Jesus the Judge and attempt somehow to give a defense as to why he or she did not repent (c.f. Acts 17:30-31). What defense could one give? What possibly could we say? God is waiting for each one who is in need of repentance to do so before it is eternally too late (2 Peter 3:9)!

What is keeping you from godly sorrow, from changing your mind, which ultimately will lead to a changed life? Whatever it is, remove that sinful thing today! We entreat you Dear Reader to repent, because "...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"!

God Communicating with Man

By: Ed Benesh

How does God speak to you? Perhaps with greater frequency than any other this question is asked of me regularly. I have spent many hours encouraging folks to daily commune with God to hear His voice and take heart, not in some mystical, magical “crossed over” sort of way, but by the means that He details for us in His Word. Now, make no mistake about it; I am not saying that all you have to do is read the Bible or study it. If that were so, then why give all the commands and encouragement to “meditate” on His Word or encourage us to “pray for wisdom?”

Think about it for a moment. How many ways do you communicate? Obviously, you speak words, but there is much more. As a matter of fact, researchers will tell you that well over half of what you communicate is not verbal, but through some other means. We will gesture, add various tones to our words and indicate attitude through posture or emotion. When we begin to break each of these down further, then we can truly see that what we communicate and how we communicate comes in many different forms. The young man who bursts through my office door, storms to the nearest chair, throws himself in it and wrings his hands incessantly, has pretty much told me that something is wrong, and he is in need of help without ever speaking a word.

Now, the Bible is God’s verbal communication to us, and it is wonderful, amazing and a marvelous thing that gives us all the information we need to become and remain His children. It is also the Rosetta Stone of understanding all the other ways that God communicates with us, which are no less valuable. For instance, God speaks to us through the natural world in volumes that are just amazing. Think for a moment of the natural beauty and variety we see around us each day. Do they not speak of just how loving God is toward us? Think of all the cycles of nature built into the natural order of things. Do they not speak of the unmistakable care and concern of God?

These, my friends, are the nonverbal communications of God, and by them, He speaks to you every day. Every day we are reminded that people die, life is beautiful, time must be used wisely and so much more – through the gift of His nonverbal communication.

In this day may you realize that God is continually trying to influence you in many ways. Hear His voice and heed it today. Give yourself to Him and live. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1 NKJV). “The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory” (Psalm 97:6). “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

Bible Repentance

By Robert Rushmore

Introduction

Before we can study repentance, we must first understand all repentance entails. Webster uses the three following definitions when defining "repentance:" (1) "to feel sorry or self-reproachful for what one has done or failed to do," (2) to feel such regret or dissatisfaction over some past action, intent, etc. as to change one's mind about," (3) "to feel so contrite over ones sins as to change, or decide to change, one's ways; be penitent." While all three of these definitions are somewhat accurate, a combination of the last two gives the most complete definition, as it demands a change of mind and a change of action. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* states the term "signifies 'to change one's mind or purpose'" and, in the New Testament, always involves "a change for the better." Further, "this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God" (*Vine's*).

Bible Examples

Turn to Luke 19:1-10. As we recall the account, Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Tax collectors were known for cheating people in order to receive great riches (*Nelson's*). As long as the Roman government received its share of the taxes, the collectors could take anything they wanted for themselves, even if it was not part of the tax. For this reason, tax collectors were greatly disliked by the people and considered equal with sinners. Notice also that Zacchaeus was a "chief among the publicans." Most likely, this meant he had other publicans working for him, from which he took a portion of their profits as well (*Barnes'*). The repentance of Zacchaeus is seen in verse eight. "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Zacchaeus not only repented with words, but his actions also showed his penitent attitude as he made restitution for his sins.

Turn now to Matthew 3:1-10. In this passage we read of the Sadducees and Pharisees going to John the Baptist to be baptized. Notice in particular verses 8-10. In verse eight, they are told, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." The word meet means "deserving" or "suitable" (*New Exhaustive*). It is a request for their actions to show a change, indicating a true penitent heart. The likeness given is that of a fruitless tree. Verse ten shows such trees are cut down and burned. The same will be so with those who merely act their repentance. Matthew also records a warning by Jesus, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (7:21). It is one thing to state a change, but another to live that change.

The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) is a great example of repentance as well. The first part of the repentance is seen when the young man determines in his own mind to make change and return home (verses 17-19). He states "I will arise...I will say." In verse twenty, he acts upon what he has already determined as "he arose and came to his father."

Repentance and Car Batteries

Car batteries have positive and negative terminals. If only one of the terminals is connected, the car will not work; both terminals are absolutely necessary. Bible repentance works the same way. The negative terminal is the cessation of sin. The positive terminal is embracing God's way. When repenting, we must not only stop committing and turn away from the sin, but also replace that action with something positive, thus embracing God's way. If one were to stop the sinful action without replacing it with good, a void remains. The unfilled void must be filled. If we do not fill it with goodness, we may inadvertently fill it with the same or another sinful act. Just like the car battery, repentance requires both a positive and a negative terminal.

Consider James 4:7-8. Here we see a two-step process for submitting to God. The first step is to resist the devil which is equivalent to the cessation of sin. To resist means "to stand against" (*New Exhaustive*) or to oppose. In Ephesians 6:10-18 Paul discusses the "Whole Armor of God" and its use to resist the devil. In verse eleven of that text, we read of our ability to "stand against" the devil. Standing against the devil is resisting him. The parts of the armor are found in verses fourteen through eighteen. Only by utilizing every piece of the armor can one effectively resist the devil, resulting in his flight.

The second step found in James 4:7-8 is drawing nigh to God, equivalent to embracing God's way. To draw near to something is "to make near" or "approach" it (*New Exhaustive*). According to Hebrews 7:19, one draws nigh to God through the Gospel. By following the teachings of God and Jesus found within the Gospel, we approach God. John 14:15 tells us to keep God's commandments in order to show our love for him, thus making ourselves near to him. The result of drawing nigh to God is that he will in turn draw nigh to us. We can abide in God's love through obedience (John 15:10). To abide in God's love is "to stay" (*New Exhaustive*) in God's love. Basically, God will accept us if we accept him.

When Are We to Repent?

The Bible records two instances to repent. The first is included in what man has named "The Plan of Salvation." This is the process we are currently studying. After one believes the Word of God and decides to be obedient to God's commands, repentance is the next logical course. In Acts Chapter Two when Peter and the rest of the apostles taught in Jerusalem, the Jews asked what it was they needed to do. Peter told them to repent of their sins (Acts 2:38). God even commands all who desire to be right with him to repent of their sins (Acts 17:30).

The other occasion to repent is for Christians to return to God when they err. We find example of this in Acts 8:9-22. Verses 9-13 record Simon, and others, obeying the Gospel. In verses 18-21, Simon sinned by trying to buy miraculous gifts from Peter and John. In verse twenty-two, Peter commanded Simon to "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Simon was to make a change in his life and pray to God for forgiveness.

Conclusion

As the Bible teaches repentance, it is more than words expressing feeling. Repentance is an expressed feeling seen by our actions. Repentance is a change of mind resulting in a change of actions. We have seen this through the example of Zacchaeus. It has been seen by the words of John the Baptist to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Repentance is necessary for two instances in one's life: in the process that makes one a Christian, and for an erring Christian to return to God.