

## Repentance toward God

Sermon delivered on September 7th, 2014

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Text: *Acts 20:17-24*

The Apostle Paul preached the gospel of the grace of God. And I want to follow his example.

*I may not be able to preach the gospel better than Paul but even Paul could not preach a better gospel.* - C. S. Spurgeon

The gospel I seek to preach is the gospel of the grace of God.

As I promised last Sunday, I am going to preach about repentance today.

Before I proceed, let me remind you that we have a merciful and forgiving God. I can freely talk to you about repentance because...

*Psalm 103:8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*

*2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Why should we be concerned about learning the doctrine of repentance? Why should we spend 45 minutes or so, talking about repentance?

### **Because there is no salvation and forgiveness of sins without repentance**

*Luke 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

Along with the suffering, the death, the resurrection and forgiveness of sins, we are to preach repentance.

Again let me remind you of our message last Sunday. The Bible clearly teaches that we are saved through faith and faith alone.

*Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

*2 Timothy 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

So it is clear that we are saved through faith plus nothing. But true saving faith is always coupled with true repentance. A genuine sorrow for sin and a willingness to turn from sin.

Our Lord warns us in ...

*Luke 13:3, 5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Unless you and I repent we will also perish.

There is no salvation without repentance. It is very crucial that we have repented and that we have biblically repented. For as there are many false faiths, there are also as many false repentances. There are kinds of repentance that is not unto salvation. There are kinds of repentance that bring forth death instead of life.

*2 Corinthian 7:9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. 10: For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

This morning I will, by the grace of God attempt to shed some light on this doctrine and may God use it for His glory and for our benefit.

## **II - What repentance is not**

### **1. Repentance is not mere confession**

It is not mere acknowledgment of sin. It is not mere confessing ones sinfulness. Most people would not deny the fact that all men are sinners. But repentance is not simply confessing sin or admitting ones sinfulness.

#### **Pharaoh**

*Exodus 9:27 And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.*

Pharaoh acknowledged his sin and his sinfulness but did not repent toward God and his actions did not change.

Many men and women in prison acknowledged that they had sinned, but most of them do not move beyond this to exercise repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **2. Repentance is not giving up sin out of fear of its consequences**

Some quit their bad habits or crime out of fear of the consequence. Others give up their sin for a time; not because he dislikes it, but because he sees that it is ruining him. This is regret for consequences, not sorrow for sin.

A chain smoker discovers that he has a lung cancer and now he repents that his smoking habits caused him his health. A drunk driver hit a boy crossing the street, how sorry he was after being informed that he killed a boy crossing the street. A drug addict decides to quit drugs because he knows drugs will ruin his health. A gambler now gives up gambling because he will go bankrupt if he doesn't quit.

#### **A personal testimony:**

Before I got saved I smoked and I tried to quit smoking and I was successful. I quit smoking, not because I realized it is sin but because I knew it was bad for my health. This has nothing to do with repentance.

Many men reform for fear of death, and judgment, and the wrath to come. But if this fear goes no further than a selfish desire to escape punishment, but if they could be assured that no punishment would follow, such persons would continue in sin, and not only be content to live in it, but be delighted to have it so. Some of these fears are not necessarily wrong or bad, they are healthy in many ways, but they are not necessarily repentance unto life.

### **3. Repentance is not giving up sin because you were caught**

Some quit their bad habits or crime out of shame because they had been caught. They quit their sins because they had been dishonored, because their reputation had been stained. They show remorse because they were found out. If they had not been found out they would have continued in their sins. It is not the sin itself which troubles them; it is the thought that they have been discovered.

Many in prison show remorse and sorry for having done wrong. They are not sorry for the sin itself, but they are affected because their reputation had been stained.

#### **King Saul**

He was sorry that he got caught in various acts of disobedience, but we know that he did not repent because his actions did not change (*1 Samuel 15:24; 24:17; 26:21*).

### **4. Repentance is not mere remorse**

Remorse - regret, a painful regret for wrong doing

The Bible tells us that men can be remorseful about their actions without exercising genuine repentance unto salvation. This is described as the "*sorrow of the world*" in *2 Corinthians 7:10*.

#### **Judas**

*Matthew 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4: Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. 5: And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

Judas betrayed our Lord; and after having done so, an overwhelming sense of the enormous evil he had committed seized upon him. He confessed his sins to the chief priests, and returned their money. Then he went out from the presence of those evil men and hanged himself! He was remorseful but did not repent toward God. Judas regretted his actions, but he did not turn to God.

See what Judas did. He had sinned, he confessed his wrong, he returned the gold; and yet after all that, he was still unforgiven, unsaved and is now in hell for eternity.

Repentance is not mere confession, is not giving up sin because you were caught, is not giving up sin out of fear of consequence, is not mere remorse.

### **III - What repentance is**

#### **True repentance is a repentance toward God**

Paul did not merely preach repentance, he preached repentance toward God. True repentance looks toward God.

*Psalm 51:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

*The repentant man sees that the greatest offence of all his offences is that **he has offended God**. Conviction of sin centers upon the sense of one's guilt before God, or one's uncleanness in His sight or one's rebellion against Him; but always it is a sense of the need to get right, not simply with oneself or other people but with God.*

### **False repentance is man-centered whereas true repentance is God-centered**

False repentance is focused on self, on the consequence of the wrong done, on the punishment. The person who merely reforms are merely concerned about the people he has offended and the consequences of his actions in his present life. Judas confessed his sins to the chief priests (*Matthew 27:3*).

Those who truly repent, change their mind about their relationship with God and this results in a change in the way they live.

Repentance is basically changing of one's mind which results in a change in behavior and action.

### **The Prodigal Son, an example of Biblical repentance**

*Luke 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19: And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

The Prodigal Son's repentance was demonstrated by his change of attitude toward God as well as toward his father. The prodigal son came back to his father and did not say, "Father, I am sorry for what I have done, because I lost all my inheritance and my friends, because all my friends forsook me, because I missed the comforts of home, because I ruined my health, because I ruined my reputation."

No, he was not sorry because he lost everything, he was sorry because he sinned against God and against his father.

True repentance has reference to God and to His holiness. It is being sorry and sorrowful for having offended a holy, gracious, and loving God.

*Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

Repentance is not only a heart broken for sin, but also from sin. We must forsake what we would have God forgive. This is the mark of true repentance. This is the evidence that true repentance has taken place.

*Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8:*

***Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:***

Therefore produce fruit that proves your repentance.

*Acts 26:17-20*

## **IV - Encouragement to repent**

*2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some people think. Instead He is being patient with you and me, not willing that anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. The Lord has shown longsuffering to us all and yet many have not repented. If you have not repented or turned to Him, do so today.

Listen to the words of our merciful Saviour...

*Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

### **For those who have repented**

Many of us have experienced the forgiveness of God. What a relief! What a great burden, a great weight have been lifted off from our hearts. No more guilt. No more condemnation. What forgiveness! What salvation! What a God we have! What a Saviour we have!

### **For those who have not yet repented**

Come to God! Come to Christ! Come as you are! Do not attempt to turn away from sin first before coming to God. Do not attempt to change your life first before coming to Christ. Go to Christ with sin and all and He will wash away all your sins. Bring your sins to God and the blood of Jesus His Son will cleanse you from all sins. Amen!