

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

Repentance is one of the great themes of the Bible. It is mentioned by all of the prophets. In the New Testament great importance is attached to repentance. When John the Baptist began his ministry in the wilderness of Judea, he called upon the people to repent, saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" Matthew 3:2. When Jesus began His public ministry, He took up the same subject and preached repentance wherever He went. He said, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" Mark 1:15. The apostles, in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus, "went out, and preached that men should repent" Mark 6:12. When Paul stood on the Mars Hill in Athens, the world's great center of culture, he told the people that God had spoken and commanded men everywhere, even in cultured Athens, to repent. Said he, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" Acts 17:30. Failure on the part of man to heed Christ's call to repentance means that he shall utterly perish. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" Luke 13:3.

Does the doctrine of repentance find such a prominent place in the preaching and teaching of today? One must admit that it has been sadly neglected. Has the need for repentance diminished? Has God lessened or changed the terms of admission into His Kingdom? By no means! Repentance must take place before one can be saved. Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." In the light of this truth, it is a tragedy that the doctrine of repentance is neglected so woefully in much of the present-day preaching.

I. The Nature of Repentance.

The Greek word, "metanoia", which is translated "repentance", literally means a change of mind. Archbishop Trench defines "metanoia" as being "that mighty change on mind, heart, and life, brought by the Spirit of God, which we call repentance." It is also defined as, "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, 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."

Dr. Boyce gave the following definition: "Repent means to reconsider, and to change one's view, mind, or purpose, or even judgment, implying disapproval and abandonment of past opinions and purposes and the adoption of others which are different".

Genuine repentance has three elements:

1. An Intellectual Element.

This takes place when sin is perceived. It implies a change of view with regard to sin, God, and self. Sin comes to be recognized as personal guilt; God, as the One Who justly demands righteousness; and self as defiled and helpless. The Scriptures speak of this aspect of repentance as the knowledge of sin. There is a change of opinion about one's condition and course in the light of this recognition of sin as involving personal guilt, defilement, and helplessness. "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" Psalm 51:3. There can be no repentance until sin is recognized, but recognition of sin is not all of repentance.

2. An Emotional Element.

This implies a change of feeling about sin. A change of feeling must inevitably

follow a change of mind. Feelings correspond with the intellectual beliefs. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin" Psalm 51:1-2. There is a sorrow for sin and a hatred of it because one recognizes it as an offense against God.

3. A Volitional Element.

A real change of opinion and feeling will produce a change of will and action. In repentance there is a change of purpose. There is an inward turning from sin to God with a desire to seek pardon and cleansing.

Repentance includes a change of thought, a change of feeling, and a change of will. A great English Theologian defined repentance as "Sins perceived, sins, abhorred, and sins abandoned." Greenfield, the great Lexicographer of New Testament Greek, defined repentance as involving "a change in one's thinking and feeling and acting". One who repents thinks differently, feels differently, and acts differently with reference to sin and holiness and God.

II. The Necessity of Repentance.

Two facts are involved in repentance, namely, sin and grace. If man is not a sinner, he would not need to repent; if there is no grace, it would not do him any good to repent.

Why is repentance necessary?

1. God commands it.
"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" Acts 17:30.
2. Christ desires it.
"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" II Peter 3:9.
3. Forgiveness of sins depends on it.
"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" Acts 3:19.
4. Possession of peace is conditioned upon it.
"There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" Isaiah 48:22.
5. Entrance into heaven depends upon it.

The Lord cannot save you if you are too stubborn to repent. "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" Luke 13:3. That verse from the lips of Jesus makes it clear that the only door of escape from perdition for any person is repentance. There is no substitute for it. One cannot go where God is without it. It is repent or perish!

III. The Means To Repentance.

1. The preaching of the gospel.
The Holy Spirit, through gospel preaching, leads man to see his guilty distance

from God. Thus, perceiving his evil way, he recognizes that he stands justly condemned as a wilful transgressor of the laws of a just and holy God. There steals into his soul a sorrow that he has sinned against God. This sorrow leads him to change his mind concerning a course of sin, and the adoption of a purpose to follow God's will.

2. The reproofing of the Holy Spirit.

"And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin" John 16:8.

3. The gift of Christ's grace.

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" Acts 5:31.

4. The grant of God.

"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" Acts 11:18.

Repentance is not something which one can originate within himself, or can pump up within himself as one would pump water out of a well. It is a divine gift. Yet, this divine gift is brought about through the use of means.

5. The goodness of God toward His creatures.

"Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" Romans 2:4.

IV. The Results of Repentance.

1. Remission of sins and their being blotted out.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" Luke 24:47.

2. Joy in heaven.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" Luke 15:10.

3. The gift of the Holy Spirit.

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" Acts 2:38.

4. Times of refreshing.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" Acts 3:19.

V. The Evidences of Repentance.

1. A change of mind.
2. A change of judgment.
3. A change of affections.

Repentance turns rejoicing in sin into sorrow for sin. It turns the love of sin into the hatred of sin.

4. A change of conduct.

Repentance manifests itself in turning away from evil ways. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55:7.

What a change repentance made in Paul! It changed a persecutor of Christians into a preacher of the gospel.

Repentance and faith are inseparable, and complementary in their relations. They are the two sides of an experience of grace. In repentance the sinner is looking at himself as he is before God; in faith he is looking at Christ as Christ is before God. In repentance the sinner loses hope in himself; in faith he finds hope in Christ. Faith is a looking to Christ as our sole dependence for salvation. The Lord is giving you an opportunity to repent, commanding you to repent, and encouraging you to repent. Do so now.