

## Considering Repentance

Concerning those who failed to worship God Paul said, “*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).*” The call to repentance is too often repeated to be ignored: Repent, or perish (Lk. 13:3); repent and be converted (Acts 3:19); repent of wickedness (Acts 8:22); repent and do the first works (Rev. 2:5); repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Accordingly, repentance is not an option, but an often emphasized command to be obeyed by all mankind. Repentance accompanies conversion, is the proper response to personal wickedness, is to precede baptism and is the alternative to perishing.

Sorrow, or remorse, is essential to repentance, but does not alone constitute repentance. Two types of sorrow are spoken of in 2 Cor. 7:10: Godly and worldly. It is understood by the reference to worldly sorrow that one may be sorrowful without respect to God or His will. This type of sorrow works, or brings about, spiritual death. Opposite to worldly sorrow is godly sorrow, which can only occur when an individual has accepted that he has sinned against God. This is the sorrow that works, or results in, repentance. Jesus illustrates repentance in the parable of the two sons (Mat. 21:28-32): The father directed both to work in his vineyard. One said that he would, but did not. The other said that he would not, but afterward repented and went. It becomes clear from both the teachings of Jesus and Paul that repentance is not sorrow alone, neither is it simply stopping doing wrong, nor is it simply doing that which is right. True repentance is a combination of the three.

It is also important to note that since repentance is a prerequisite to baptism unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) that unrepented sin remains an obstacle to forgiveness. Baptism does not relieve anyone of the need to repent, nor does baptism make any sin that an individual was guilty of before immersion a “non-sin” after immersion. The scriptures do not indicate that the Lord will remit (Acts 2:38), or blot out (Acts 3:19) unrepented sin. The unrepentant individual remains dead in sin.

Attempts to make Christianity more popular in a perverse age have resulted in a minimizing of the importance of repentance in Christ’s plan of salvation. Without a doubt, repentance is probably the most difficult thing that people who are deep in sin are called upon to do, but nonetheless, like the son who first rejected his fathers instructions each of us must repent and conduct our lives according to the will of God. Repentance remains a necessity for those who would be saved from their sins.

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