

What is Repentance?

(Rom 2:4-5)

- I. Repentance is always in the 1st place, the order is never reversed in scripture
 - A) Matt 3:2- John the Baptist preached it as first
 - B) Matt 4:17, Luke 24:47- The Lord Jesus Christ preached it as first
 - C) Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31- Peter and the apostles preached it as first
 - D) Acts 17:30, 20:21, 26:18-20- Paul preached it as first
 - 1. Rom 2:4- Notice Paul did not say “the goodness of God leadeth to *believing*”
 - 2. Modern preaching has gone wrong at this point, in a “result oriented” drive for numbers and visible success, they remove repentance in an effort to soften the gospel offense to modern man
 - i. This is why there is so little sense of sin today, or of contrition, or of people under agony of soul over their sin
 - ii. Revivals have always started and been centered on repentance in the first place
- II. Definition of repentance
 - A) Latin- “to think again,” to “reconsider”
 - B) Greek- “to change the mind,” or “reverse the thinking”
 - C) Hebrew- “pity,” “sorrow,” “to rue,” or “to be moved to comfort self”
 - D) English- Webster’s 1828 makes a distinction between “legal repentance” and “evangelical repentance”
 - 1. *Legal repentance*- “pain or regret that a person feels over past behavior because it has exposed him to punishment”
 - 2. *Evangelical repentance*- “real penitence, sorrow and deep contrition for sin because it has offended or dishonored God; violation of His holy law as an act of base ingratitude towards the Being of infinite benevolence. This is true repentance because it is followed by amendment of life”
- III. Example
 - A) Matt 21:28-32- Parable on repentance
 - 1. The 1st son had to rethink his position, he had to consider again
 - i. But this is not enough to equal repentance, for he might have come to the same conclusion again, and remained in his position
 - ii. After considering the matter again, he had to have a change of mind concerning himself, he had to see that he had been wrong and an offense unto his father, but that is not enough to equal repentance
 - iii. He had to think again, change his mind, and then act on that change

- iv. True repentance is never incomplete, it results in a change of course and life
 - a) But to put the changed life at the first is wrong again, for the change must be inward and work outward, and all correct conduct must be the result of a changed mind and outlook
 - 1) Matt 12:43-45- Worthlessness of self-reformation
- 2. The 2nd son professed himself to be obedient and was not, and represents man in his natural state
 - i. For example, the Pharisee needed no repentance because he believed himself to be in a right relationship with God
 - ii. The natural man is born in a condition against God and so he must “repent” if he is to be saved, must rethink his case and arrive at new conclusions
 - a) Examples of “well I think.....”
- B) Things we must reconsider and change our minds about
 - 1. We must come to a new conclusion about God Himself
 - i. The natural man considers His goodness weakness or license, and we must come to the proper conclusion that His goodness is love
 - ii. Neither is God an angry tyrant, but a gracious and merciful God
 - iii. Neither is God in the wrong in any of the circumstances in this cruel world
 - iv. God always has man’s best interest and care at heart
 - a) Therefore repentance is an exact reversal of what took place in the Garden of Eden
 - 1) This is where man’s wrong view of God began, with “yea hath God said...”
 - 2) All our natural views and conclusions about God are completely wrong, therefore repentance is mandatory
 - 3) Consider the example of Job (Job 42:1-6- “I abhor myself”)
 - (a) Job had to realize he was not an authority on God, and that his conclusions were all wrong, which brings up the next point:
 - 2. We must come to a new conclusion about self
 - i. There must be a re-thinking about our self and our relationship to God
 - a) Read Isaac Watts hymn Vile And Full of Sin I Am
 - ii. Instead of thinking God harsh or unfair, we are amazed He has ever had mercy on us at all
 - a) Self defense goes away, and excuses cease
 - b) We begin to consider God’s goodness and longsuffering and we marvel that He does not destroy us all

- 1) This is how His goodness leads us to repentance, it causes us to think again, and to re-examine our conclusions about God's mercy and goodness
 - (a) Example of the way an adult looks back on their childhood rebellion and then become amazed at the love of their parents
 - iii. All saints hate themselves to varying degrees
 - a) But self-loathing is not enough, we must desire another way, to be pleasing to our Maker
 3. We must come to a new conclusion about life
 - i. Life is seen as under the ownership of God, and a journey back to Him
 - a) Consider all the pilgrims and sojourners of Hebrews chapter 11
 - ii. We no longer live our days to the satisfying of our lusts, but begin to desire to serve God in righteousness
 - a) 1 Cor 6:19-20- "Your life is not your own"
 4. We must come to a new conclusion about death
 - i. We see all life ending with judgment before God
 - a) 1 Cor 3:10-16- We will all stand before the judgment seat
 - b) 2 Cor 5:10- We shall give an account
- IV. Things the natural man does not know:
- A) God's goodness is designed to lead to repentance
 - B) They are treasuring up wrath in the own account with God
 - C) They do not know why they are angry with God in the first place
1. Rom 2:5- The hard and impenitent heart of man
 - i. The heart is the very center of personality and identity, thus man is wrong at his very center or core
 - a) Rom 1:21- Heart darkened
 - b) Heb 3:8- Harden not your hearts
 - ii. Man has an evil heart by natural birth
 - a) Jer 3:17, 7:24, 11:8, 16:2, 17:9, 18:12
 - iii. Mk 7:18-23- Out of the heart of man comes forth corruption and wickedness
 2. Man's problem isn't just in his mind, as so many teach today
 - i. The most brilliant men still live in vileness and corruption
 - a) Education cannot address the problem
 3. Man's problem is not just in his fleshly body
 - i. Those that suffer more illness or handicap do not excel the physically fit and able in sin, all are equally defiled
 4. Man's problem is that he naturally hates God because he is completely and totally cut off from Him, and his very nature opposed to Him
 - i. Rom 8:7- The carnal mind is enmity against God

- ii. 1 Cor 2:14- The natural man cannot receive the things of God nor know them
 - a) John 3:1-7- This is why a man must be born again, because we are in every facet of our nature corrupt and separated from God

V. Man's hard heart

A) Hard- "calloused," "dried and rough," "toughened"

1. Ezek 36:24-27- Thus we need regeneration= new fleshy heart
 - i. 2 Kings 22:19- "Because thy (Josiah) heart was tender"
2. Hard like clay hardened by the sun
 - i. The same sun melts or hardens, and so it is with the goodness of God, it leadeth some to repentance and hardens others to impenitence
 - a) God's goodness and grace come down like the rays of the sun upon all, and is designed to cause us to think again, and consider God in thankfulness at His merciful supply and goodwill, and to rethink our treatment of Him and His name
 - 1) Instead men accuse God and criticize Him for His longsuffering, laying all manner of sin and atrocity at His charge
 - (a) This is because if we do not respond to God's grace then it hardens us, none are left unaffected
 - (1) Compare "gospel hardened"
 - (2) Compare the attributes of God in Rom 2:4 with natural man in Rom 2:5

B) Impenitent- "admitting no change of mind," "refusal to reconsider"

1. "Well I think....., and I don't care what that bible says"

VI. The Day of Wrath

A) Compare Paul's play on words "riches" (*thesaurus*) of verse 4 with verse 5

1. In refusing the riches of God's goodness, man lays up riches of wrath
2. Every time a man doesn't respond to the one, he adds to the other

B) Natural man does not realize that the severity of the day of wrath is fast approaching

1. Yet in His goodness and mercy, God doesn't judge once at the end, but the result of His displeasure with sin can be easily seen
 - i. And even this ought to cause us to wonder at His goodness
 - ii. Rev 20:11-15- Great white throne