



True Repentance

Have you ever heard the word *repentance* being expressed? What is the first thing that comes to your mind? For example, do you picture someone walking on fiery coals? Do you picture someone pounding on their chest in agony? Do you picture someone turning away from something wrong they have done or their sin? Which one do you think is the right answer?

If you've picked any of the above, then most definitely you have attached the wrong definition to the word *repentance*. No worries; it is pretty common now-a-days to be a believer in Christ and have a wrong perception of the word *repentance*. Now, don't get me wrong; the problem is not in preaching repentance.

I am for repentance.

The problem lies in defining the word *repentance* wrongly, causing a wrong mindset and a wrong belief system throughout the whole body of Christ. Believers in Christ in total bondage, is the result of such an atrocity.

Firstly, many of us have been taught that *repentance* means an act of penance to atone for your sins. This is why we see people constantly in the news walking on fiery coals, getting lashes in their backs, or even going the extra mile and go through the suffering of the cross for themselves. Then those who are watching on the sideline are saying, "Wow! What humility! This guy definitely has heaven smiling down on him!" Repentance is not penance for your sin.

Secondly, many of us have been taught that *repentance* means feeling sorrow for sin. Those who believe this are usually the ones that pound their chest to show how sorry they truly are. They might go on a pity party and beg and plead for forgiveness until their knees give away. Then once they've pounded enough times, they feel the Lord has brought them back into the circle of trust. Repentance is not sorrow for your sin.

A great man of God named Charles Spurgeon commented on repentance, and I quote:

- "I hear another man cry, "Oh, sir my want of strength lies mainly in this, that I cannot repent sufficiently!" A curious idea men have of what repentance is! Many fancy that so many tears are to be shed, and so many groans are to be heaved, and so much despair is to be endured. Whence comes this unreasonable notion? Unbelief and despair are sins, and therefore I do not see how they can be constituent elements of acceptable repentance; yet there are many who regard them as necessary parts of true Christian experience. They are in great error."

Lastly, “not-so-strict” religion comes and says, “No, walking on coals is no longer necessary, neither is pounding your chest because Jesus is our atoning sacrifice, but you must first turn from sin, then God will bestow his love unto you, restore communion with you and/or bless you.” It seems like they are preaching the Gospel backwards.

Out of the 46 times the word *repent* appears in the Old Testament; 28 times God does the repenting, not man. So, if *repentance* truly means “to turn from sin”, then we have a small problem because we are saying God “turned from His sin.” This is not consistent because Jesus is beautiful and perfect in every way. He is our Lamb without blemish that took the sin of the whole world. No more atonement for your sins is needed because Jesus took all your punishment at the cross! Repentance is not to turn from sin.

What does that leave us with? The word *repent* in the New Testament is the Greek word *metanoia*, which means, “to change one's mind.” It is to change your mind about a wrong belief, which has caused you to miss the mark in a particular area of your life. The very fact that you are a believer in Christ shows that you have allowed some aspect of the Gospel of Grace to change your mind or *repent* towards God. Would you say receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior was nearly effortless? Absolutely!

True repentance always comes with a change of belief, which then changes your heart and actions. In other words, when you truly *repent*, a change will follow effortlessly.

Romans 2:4 (AMP)

Or are you [so blind as to] trifle with and presume upon and despise and underestimate the wealth of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering patience? Are you unmindful or actually ignorant [of the fact] that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repent (to change your mind and inner man to accept God’s will)?

The Bible says the goodness of God comes first, and then repentance is experienced. In other words, repentance was never meant to be a struggle for the believer but a by-product of listening and receiving from the Gospel of Grace, which reveals the amazing person of Jesus Christ and everything He did for you at the cross.

True repentance comes not by being scared of God; rather repentance comes by believing the goodness of God. Unfortunately, most believers try to repent out of fear that God will judge and condemn them for something wrong they have done. Contrary to popular opinion, repentance never comes through teaching the Law because the Law will always promote pro-activity via fear and condemnation; you could try to change your mind through your self-effort and be unsuccessful.

On the other hand, Grace will show you Jesus and everything He has finished at the cross, which will awaken you to love in your heart - love will compel you. His goodness always comes first, and then your repentance will follow. When you listen to Grace, repentance constantly occurs in your mind as you believe because you become awakened to who you are in Him! It will reveal His righteousness given you as a gift. Amen

By Joyner Briceño