Accepting the Gospel-Repentance

Acts 3:18,19

*But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.* ***Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out****, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord…*

This passage is part of a sermon that Peter preached on the occasion of the healing of a man at the temple who was lame. The healed man is so excited that he starts dancing. A crowd gathers and Peter uses this opportunity to talk to Jewish people about turning to Christ. Peter plainly challenges them to **repent** so that their sins would be blotted out. What does “repent” mean?

The word “repent” in English means to have regret for actions and to be determined to be changed so as not to repeat the actions. Many have the idea that repentance is simply feeling sorry that you did something wrong, but without any real change, no real repentance has occurred. The Greek word for repent includes remorse for error, but also includes the idea of turning around and going the other way. The Greeks used the word in their military to mean “about face” when marching. Jesus used the word “repent” in His teaching showing change is necessary. Some examples follow.

Matthew records this, *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (4:17) Mark tells us that Jesus said this, *I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.* (2:17) Jesus teaches change to be away from sin. Luke 15:7 records, *I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.*  Note that the transition is away from sin. There would not be joy in heaven over a person simply feeling sorrow for what they had done and making no effort to change. After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to His disciples and told them this: *Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and* ***that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*** (Luke 24:46-47) It is significant to see whether or not the disciples took Jesus seriously.

As we follow the trail of events, we come to the first proclamation of the Gospel by the apostles under the authority of Jesus Christ. Seven weeks after Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week, the apostles on the first day of week preach salvation in the name of Jesus. The audience accepts the message that Jesus is the Christ and asks the apostles what they should do. Here is the response given by Peter the preacher that day: ***Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins****; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* (Acts 2:38) This event occurs in Jerusalem, and we plainly see the apostles doing exactly what Jesus told them to do.

What was a crucial message the apostles shared everywhere they went? Our text for this lesson is also part of a sermon that Peter preached in Jerusalem. Here are other samples:

* Acts 5:30-32: *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior****, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.***
* *that they should* ***repent,*** *turn to God, and* ***do works befitting repentance.*** (Acts 26:20) See also Acts 11:18 and Acts 20:21

It is evident that conversion and becoming a follower of Christ definitely requires repentance, that is, a change in thought and behaviors.

What was the message for people who became Christians regarding repentance? Here is evidence to know the answer to the question.

* Romans 2:4--*Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*
* 2 Corinthians 7:10-11--*For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.* (See also 2 Timothy 2:25)
* Seven times in Revelations 2 and 3, Jesus tells Christians to repent.

All of these passages don’t say anything about faith. What about the idea that we are saved by faith alone? These passages show the doctrine of salvation by faith alone is a lie, but verses about faith still apply. THEY MUST NOT BE USED TO DENY THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE. To show these working together, let’s close with Jesus in Mark 1:15-- ***Repent, and believe in the gospel*.**