Repentance

Does the Gospel Require It?

This lesson is prompted by the idea being taught that the gospel of Jesus Christ and His work done on the cross eliminates the need or requirement for us to do anything. The teaching is that if we simply have faith alone that Jesus Christ died for our sins, then the grace of God is sufficient for our redemption. We are told we don’t need even need to repent because Christ’s death and the cross removed our sin.

Here are the passages used (All quotations unless otherwise noted are from the NKJV):

Romans 10:9-13

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

1 Corinthians 15:1-5

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

Ephesians 2:8,9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

As we begin this study, may we accept that these passages are truth. We do not accept that they include words like “only” or “alone.” Neither do these passages deny truth found in other passages about other ideas. Let me illustrate:

The American flag has 30 stars on a blue field. True or False? If you have seen the flag, you know it is true.

The American flag has 13 stripes of colors red and white. True or False? Also true. Now, do either of these contradict or prevent the other from being true. Of course not. That said, many Bible teachers totally ignore this principle of understanding and thus make scriptures fight against each other.

Let’s look at a particular example. Consider the idea of “repentance” i.e. a change in our life direction, a change of mind, or a change in our behavior. None of the three passages above mentions repentance. Does that mean repentance isn’t necessary? No, not at all. Here are a number of critical scriptures.

First, Jesus.

Matthew 9:13-- But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

This one is instruction Jesus gave to His disciples on what to preach after He had been crucified, buried and raised from the dead.

Luke 24:46-47--Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

There are others, but these plainly show that Jesus taught repentance.

Now, the apostles.

Acts 2:37-39-- Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "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. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Acts 3:17-20--"Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 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,

Acts 8:20-23--But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! 21 You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

Acts 17:30-31--Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 20:18-22--You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 26:19-21-- "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

Rom 2:4-5--Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

2 Cor 7:8-11--For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. 9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

2 Peter 3:8-9--But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

As you have read these passages, I hope you were also trying to find “grace” mentioned. Yet, you did not see it in any of these. Does that mean grace is not essential? Not at all, a complete understanding of scripture is that grace is what makes our repentance possible. God did not owe us a chance to repent. He gave it to us freely (grace) because He loved us.

Is repentance necessary for Salvation? ABSOLUTELY!