

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE IN SANCTIFICATION

Over the ages, man has been tormented by sin and the devil has held man captive using different schemes and devices. The mind has always been the battlefield and there is an ongoing battle for the soul of man. Someone once said repentance is one of the hardest commands from God and this has been found to be true to a large extent. This may not come as a surprise because the magic word “I am sorry” is quite difficult for many as well.

Sanctification means to set apart, to separate, to consecrate or to make holy. Repentance, according to Webster means feeling of sorrow especially for wrongdoing (being penitent). It means to feel sorrow for one's sin and make up one's mind to do what is right. Repent is derived from the Greek word *metanoia*, which comes from two words;

-meta: means after

-noia: means mind

Simply put, metanoia has to do with the mind afterwards. It suggests the idea of thinking about a deed after the commission of it.

What is Repentance?

It means a significant change of mind or making up of one's mind to cease from doing evil and to do good, to stop going in the wrong direction and turn again in the right direction. This is illustrated by Jesus Christ in Matt 21:28-29 ²⁸ *“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’* ²⁹ *“I will not,” he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.* Notice that Christ did not merely say that the first son repented. Neither did he say he went. Rather, Christ said the son repented and went. Repentance occurred before the son went; initially he had said ‘I will not’ but then he changed his mind – this is repentance.

Parable of the prodigal son

Luke 15:11-18 ¹¹ *And he said, A certain man had two sons: ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. ¹³ And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. ¹⁷ And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.*

Notice ‘he came to himself’ and said, “I will arise and go to my father” – this was the moment of repentance because this is when he changed his mind and will. This was preceded by godly sorrow or the realization that he had sinned against heaven and his father.

What Repentance is not

a) Being remorseful or sorry for sin

Judas was remorseful when he saw that Jesus was condemned to death, but his sorrow led him to commit suicide. Matt 27:3-5 ³ Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,⁴ Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? see thou to that.⁵ And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

i) Herod and Herodias

Mark 6:22-26 ²² And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.²³ And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.²⁴ And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.²⁵ And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.²⁶ And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. Just being sorry for one's sins does not mean repentance.

b) Covering up sin

There is no change of mind towards sin when our intent is to refuse to acknowledge our sin to God or to those we have sinned against. Proverb 28:13 ¹³ He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Sin is only truly 'covered' when it is forgiven by God. Psalm 32:1 *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* Repentance is necessary for that forgiveness to occur.

c) Being afraid because of one's sins

Felix was afraid when he came face to face with his sin but he did not repent. Acts 24:25 ²⁵ And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. Demons believe and tremble but they are still lost James 2:19 ¹⁹ Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. It is good to be afraid of our sins when fear moves us to godly sorrow, a changed mind and a changed life. But fear alone does not mean repentance.

d) Reformation

One who use to patronise the brothel decided to quit so that he can save up a few bucks to take care of a personal need. He stopped patronising a brothel without listening to the story of the cross. Same goes for an alcoholic who may stop from drunkenness/alcohol altogether because his liver has been damaged; not because his soul has been damaged. He is sorry for his poor health and he reforms but his soul is still in sin. Has he changed his life? Yes. Has he repented? No.

2 Cor. 7:10 ¹⁰ For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

What is godly sorrow?

It is being sorry before God for what one has done whether anyone else knows about it or not; this is not repentance but leads on to repentance and brings no regret. 2 Sam 11 & 12

gives details about King David, his encounter with Beersheba and his activities to cover up his sin. In II Sam 12:1-7, Nathan the prophet came to expose David for his sin by telling him a story. What is the reaction of David when his sin is exposed? 2 Sam 12:13 ¹³*And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD.....* Psalm 51:4 ⁴*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* He makes no excuse, no rationalisation, did not shift blame. He had godly sorrow which produces repentance but he faced the consequences.

What is worldly grief?

This is being upset or sorry at being caught or because you experience the consequences of your actions. It is not a sorrow about what we have done against God. We feel regret of the present predicament and the shame, not because you sin against God.

Repentance therefore is a significant change in the mind or will of a person. Repentance requires a lifetime of work-bearing fruits, changing our attitudes, giving up what is wrong, giving to the will of God. Repentance does not give excuses. Adam blamed Eve, and even God for his sins Gen 3:12 ¹²*And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*

Fruits meet for repentance

Our actions need to reflect that we have turned to God. Matt. 3:8 ⁸*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*". The word "meet" means "suitable". Therefore, when one repents, the proof of one's repentance is seen in the fruit of one's reformed life. Matt. 7:20 Jesus says ²⁰*wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.* How do you tell someone is changed or living a new life? Jesus says we can tell by their fruit. Such fellow would cease his/her;

- unscriptural marriage
- unscriptural worship
- all unholy relationships/associations
- Unremitted money at your place of work, and so on.

Our actions need to reflect that we have turned to God and are changing the way we think and act. Luke 3:8-14 ⁸*Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.* ⁹*And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*¹⁰*And the people asked him, saying, what shall we do then?* ¹¹*He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.*¹²*Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?*¹³*And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.*¹⁴*And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.*

Repentance entails us accepting our guilt by being convicted of our sins by the word of God or gospel Acts 2:37 ³⁷ *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

What created godly sorrow that leads to repentance? It is the gospel of Christ, the glad tidings Rom 1:16 ¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* The gospel does the following;

- Convicts of sin Acts 2:37
- Reveals the eternal consequences of dying in sin
- It teaches concerning the goodness of God towards undeserving and rebellious mankind John 3:16; Rom 2:4

If one sins after becoming a Christian?

One who is already a Christian, when he sins, he must repent to receive forgiveness of sins. Example is a brother who in the Corinth church married his father's wife 1 Cor.5:1-13. Paul had to write the church, rebuking the puffed up brother and the church in his epistles instructing the brother to be excommunicated and delivered to Satan. In 2 Cor. 7:8-11, Paul had to write the church again where we read that the brother had godly sorrow and the church was not willing to accept him.

1 John 1:7-10 ⁷ *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*⁸ *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*¹⁰ *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* James 5:16 ¹⁶ *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

How long should it take one to repent of sin?

As soon as we realise our sinful state, we ought that very hour to be sorry and sorry enough to change our mind, resolve never to go back, God helping. Whenever you have gotten to the point that your will is subdued, you have sorrowed long enough.

The Lord takes delight in quick and willing obedience Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸ *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

This is the sweet and heavenly invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Examples;

- On the day of Pentecost Acts 2

- Simon the sorcerer Acts 8:22

- The Ethiopian Eunuch

The parable of the fig tree Luke 13:1-9.

Luke 13 records an unusual historical event and we are not entirely sure of such event. Note that Pontius Pilate, a Roman governor of Judea, a sub-province of Syria, commanded Roman military units, authorised construction projects, arranged for collection of taxes and decided civil and criminal cases. Background of Luke 13: history has it that Pilate shed the blood of the Jewish people which would cause more Jewish revolts against the Romans. This is another incident of the cruelty of Pontius Pilate. The execution of these Galileans must have a pound in the temple complex because their blood was mixed with the blood of their sacrifices. This infuriated the Jews as this was a great defilement and atrocity to the Jewish nation. Pilate was so hostile to the Jewish nation. What is fascinating about the story is that Jesus does not address the sins of Pilate as the audience would expect. He did not speak about the Roman governor of the province. Rather, Jesus deals with the sins of the nation.

Vs 2 – 5 ² Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were guiltier than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Jesus now tells a story/parable to get his point across and he does this a lot to make a difficult point using parable. He tells the parable of an unfruitful fig tree. The fig tree would have had obvious implications to Jesus' audience. The Old Testament on many occasions used the fig tree as a representation of Israel. When the fig tree bore fruits, the nation was in prosperity, and blessed by God. However, when the fig tree was barren, the nation was found lacking in the sight of God and was considered accursed Hosea 9:10.

Therefore, when Jesus begins to tell the story about a man who planted a fig tree in his vineyard, it was not going to be hard for the people to understand that Jesus was talking about Israel as a whole. The owner of the vineyard comes and looks to see if the fig tree has borne any fruit. However, he comes and found that the fig tree has not borne any fruits. The owner tells the gardener that he has come for 3 years looking for fruits on this fig tree but there is still none to be found. The fig tree is wasting soil, wasting space and must be cut down. However, the gardener intercedes on behalf of the fig tree. The gardener asked that one more year be given to it, and he will put fertiliser on it.

Conclusion:

True repentance is not just feeling bad; it is turning 180 degrees from sin toward God. True repentance involves hating what God hates because of a relationship with Him, rather than just fearing punishment. "Is there a dark corner that needs to be cleaned out?" Repent today!!

Acts 3:19 ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord’.

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