

The Prince's Bride: What Revelation Meant to the Ones It Was Written To

Repentance: A Matter of Head, Heart, Will, and Hands

RECAP

The Call to Repent

Repentance is the remedy Jesus prescribes for five of the seven churches in Revelation. Last week we looked at what the word actually means in the New Testament, stripping away centuries of baggage. Metanoia — a change of mind about how one's life is oriented, accompanied by godly sorrow, and a turning toward God. Today we look at what that repentance involves in practice.

Matthew 3:2 (NRSVue)

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Matthew 4:17 (NRSVue)

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Acts 3:19 (NRSVue)

"Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out..."

FOUR DIMENSIONS

Repentance Is a Matter of...

The Head

Repentance begins when we are confronted with something God is not pleased with — through inner conviction, Scripture, or the

loving rebuke of another. We must wrestle in our minds with it, understand it, own it, and accept it. For the Christians at Ephesus, it came straight from the mouth of Jesus.

The Heart

True repentance is always accompanied by deep sorrow — what Paul calls godly grief, as distinct from general worldly regret.

2 Corinthians 7:9-11 (NRSVue)

Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved but because your grief led to repentance, for you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you...

The Will

We decide — in the part of us God gave complete agency over — to turn away from whatever prompted our need for repentance. Not merely sorry, but determined not to continue.

Proverbs 28:13 (NRSVue)

No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

The Hands

Repentance isn't true repentance if a change in behavior is not part of it. John the Baptist, calling crowds to repent, was asked what that actually looked like in practice.

Luke 3:7-14 (NRSVue)

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What, then, should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

Acts 26:20 (NRSVue)

...declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance.

THE FIFTH ELEMENT

God's Part: Divine Enablement

True biblical repentance — head, heart, will, and hands — is more than we can produce on our own. We cannot fully repent of anything without God's involvement. This is not an excuse; it is a gift.

2 Timothy 2:24-25 (NRSVue)

The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth.

Philippians 2:13 (NRSVue)

...for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Romans 2:4 (NRSVue)

...Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

ACTS 3:1-8

Within the Command Is the Power

A man lame from birth — not only without the power to walk but without any experience of walking — is commanded to stand up and walk. Two things are at work: his willingness to act in faith on the command, and God's power making the impossible possible. Neither alone is enough.

Acts 3:1-8 (NRSVue)

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

Within the call to repent is the power to do it. It requires us to meet God there. This is as true for the Ephesians being called to repent of loveless orthodoxy as it is for anyone coming to God for the first time.

Romans 10:13 (NRSVue)

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

NOTES
