

THE CLEARING OF THE CONSCIENCE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Golden Text: Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-2)

Lesson Text Hebrew 9:13,14

(13) For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

(14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the

I. WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF REPENTANCE?

The results of repentance and faith are difficult to separate since these two foundations are combined in regeneration. Nevertheless, certain results can be attributed to repentance: joy in heaven, pardon and forgiveness, the reception of the Holy Spirit, and the beginning of a whole new lifestyle.

A. Joy In Heaven.

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, as well as in the heart of God, over the repentance of sinners.

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. . . . Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke 15:7;10)

B. Forgiveness And Pardon.

Repentance prepares and qualifies us to receive God's forgiveness and pardon. Repentance in no way earns God's favor. In his grace and mercy he has promised to forgive and cleanse us, when we open ourselves to him in repentance according to his word. As he does this for us, we experience a deep inner peace and assurance — we know our sins have been washed away.

"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;" (Acts 3:19)

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38)

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:6,7)

C. Reception Of The Holy Spirit.

When we repent, God pours out his Spirit upon us and gives us spiritual understanding of his word. Once we have made the decision to "do" his will, we "know" whether the teaching or doctrine has its origin in

God or not. Repentance is a part of preparing and cleansing us as a vessel to be filled with the holy presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit.

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:2-4)

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:31)

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve." (Acts 19:1-7)

D. New Life Patterns.

Repentance is the beginning of an entire life of turning to God. After our initial turning from sin to God, there is a progressive repentance which continues throughout our whole lifetime as God separates us to himself. During this process, which the Bible calls "sanctification," we are made aware of things which displease God and must be changed. Our response is to

repent when he sheds his light upon these things. Little by little, we are changed into his image as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We are not only finished with sin, but we are growing in holiness.

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (II Corinthians 7:1)

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (I Corinthians 6:9-11)

II. WHY MUST WE REPENT FROM "DEAD WORKS"?

Until we stop relying upon our own efforts, we will be unable to rely upon God. All other religions emphasize man's duties toward God; Christianity alone offers a salvation which has already been purchased for man at God's own expense. God's salvation is not only given freely, but it is applied by the Holy Spirit living within us. We must turn from all self-reliance to experience life in God.

A. We Must Stop Trusting In Ourselves Before We Can Wholly Trust God.

"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;" (II Corinthians 1:9-10)

"But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." (Psalms 13:5)

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Psalms 23:1)

"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him." (Psalms 28:7)

"In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness." (Psalms 31:1)

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalms 46:1)

B. Nothing We Can Do Will Produce Life; We Must Draw From God As Our Source.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:4-5)

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

C. Reliance Upon Religious Tradition Dilutes The Effectiveness Of God's Word.

"...Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." (Matthew 15:6)

"Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye." (Mark 7:13)

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Colossians 2:8)

Dead works include everything we do without relying upon God and drawing from his life. Very often these are very religious things, and we do not recognize them as subtle forms of self-effort and dependence upon ourselves. We have no life apart from vital union with Jesus Christ; nothing

we can do will produce that life. Throughout the scriptures, dead works are contrasted with "fruit" because fruit grows as the result of union with something alive.

III. HOW DOES GOD'S GRACE DIFFER FROM DEPENDENCE UPON DEAD WORKS?

Grace is the exact opposite of earning merit through works. God's favor cannot be earned and can never be repaid. It is always a free gift, without reference to merit or worthiness.

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace..." (Romans 11:6)

A. Grace Justifies; Works Can Never Justify.

"That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:7)

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:16)

B. Grace is Given Freely; Works Make Us Debtors.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24)

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." (Romans 4:4)

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7)

C. Grace Imparts Humility And Faith To Accept Christ's Salvation; Works Make Us Boastful And Resistant To Mercy.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)

D. Grace Glorifies God; Dependence Upon Works Seeks To Honor Man.

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Ephesians 1:6)

So if, through your faith in Christ ye are dead to the principles of this world, why, as if you were still part and parcel of this world-wide system, do you take the slightest notice of these purely human prohibitions - "Don't touch this," "Don't touch that," and "Don't handle the other"? "This," "that" and "the other" will all pass away after use! These regulations look wise on the surface, with their self-inspired efforts at worship, their policy of self-humbling, and their studied neglect of the body. But in actual practice they bestow honor, not to God, but to man's own pride. (Colossians 2:20-23)

E. Grace Says That Christ Did It All For Us; Dead Works Declare That We Need Christ "And" Something Else.

Trying to mix grace and dependence on anything else, even the law, only nullifies the power of God's salvation.

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4)

IV. HOW DOES RELIANCE UPON DEAD WORKS MAKE REDEMPTION INEFFECTUAL IN OUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE?

When we continue in dead works, we become enslaved to a legalistic system which demands of us works only the Holy Spirit can produce in us. The New Covenant is a new heart, not a new set of external demands. Since we cannot achieve these works on our own, we fail to meet our own standards. For this reason we experience constant bondage and condemnation.

Condemnation always produces a deep unsureness or lack of confidence toward God. We dread approaching him and find all kinds of

excuses not to draw near to him in prayer and communion. Even when we do make petition to God, we are unable to ask with confidence because of the internal nagging of condemnation. Instead of serving God out of love for him, we do so out of fear.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Galatians 5:1)

V. WHY DO WE NEED OUR CONSCIENCE PURGED FROM DEAD WORKS?

Our conscience will continue either to condemn us or to excuse us, as long as our reliance is upon works of merit that we think we can do. This keeps alive a consciousness of sin, because we never know when we have done enough. Also, we continue to disappoint ourselves by not meeting our own goals and standards. Awareness of sin can only be settled by the blood of Jesus.

The Lord removes from us the whole system of measuring ourselves according to attempts to merit righteousness. He reveals to us that all acceptance with God is on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ. He alone is righteous and we are accepted in him. No other standards apply when we are dealing with God.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14)

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (II Timothy 2:20-21)

A. We Are Freed To Serve The Living God - A New Dimension In Worship.

The word "serve" means "worship," and conveys the thought of our voluntary giving ourselves and all we have as a spiritual sacrifice to God. Once the Holy Spirit frees us from the legalistic demands of a system of

works, we spontaneously "want" to serve him. The realization of acceptance according to God's mercy releases us to delight in doing God's will.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)

"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." (I Chronicles 16:29)

"Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing." (Psalms 100:2)

B. We Are Freed To Enter Into The Rest Of Faith.

When we quit doing our own works, we find the rest of faith. Our assurance is based upon Christ's work for us and in us. We can afford to put an end to self-effort and to allow the Holy Spirit to produce Christ-likeness within us.

"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." (Hebrews 4:10)

C. We Have Confidence Toward God.

Once our conscience has been purged of guilt and dead works, we experience a confidence toward God which enables us to approach him boldly. The Greek word for "boldness" means "freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance, plainness, openness, cheerful, courage, or confidence." We have this confidence, we can talk to God directly from our hearts without holding back in fear or guilt.

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)." (Hebrews 10:22-23)

D. We Relax Our Standards In Relation To Other People.

When we are no longer struggling over legalism, we are able to relax our standards in relation to others. We can stop being critical. We can enlarge our circle of friendship, knowing that differences in habits and practices not emphasized by the word need not be top priority to us. Fellowship is determined by a living relationship with God, not by the way we dress, the days we observe, our dietary habits and the like. We can afford to be tolerant of others.