

Repentance

Unless you Repent you will all perish

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Mark 1:14-15 "...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Here we see the Lord Jesus travelling around the country of Galilee at the beginning of his ministry calling on the people to repent. This study focusses on repentance and the need of it in the christian life.

Now after some time spent in training his twelve chosen disciples Jesus sent them out in pairs to preach the same message that he preached, that is a call to repentance. It's interesting that the method that Jesus considered as the best method of evangelism was to combine the preaching of the gospel with medical missionary work.

Mark 6:7;12-13 7" And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; ...12 They went out and preached that men should repent. 13 And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them."

Jesus gave the twelve a supernatural authority over demons and over genuine illnesses. This caused quite a stir among the people so that they would listen to the message that the disciples preached.

What is repentance that featured so predominantly in the message of Jesus?

Definition of Repentance. Greek - "Metanoia" (word number 3341) To change your mind from evil to good. Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D. *The Complete Wordstudy Dictionary New Testament.* AMG Publishers. Chattanooga, TN 37422 USA. 1993.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Before Jesus began his public ministry his cousin John the Baptist began a six month ministry to prepare the way for the appearance of Jesus. This ministry consisted of three months of preaching a call to repentance and baptism and another three months languishing in prison where he was eventually executed by Herod.

Luke 3:2-3 "...the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. 3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins"

Matthew 3:4 "Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; 6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 10 The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Luke 3:7 "So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

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After Jesus is baptised by John he begins his three and a half year ministry doing medical missionary work, preaching about repentance and about the kingdom of God.

Matthew-Levi who was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus was also a very wealthy tax collector. He gave a big reception at his house and a great crowd was there. He did not hide the fact that he was a follower of Jesus. When the pharisees and scribes saw the disciples of Jesus eating food with tax collectors and a poor class of people that were known as “sinners”, these holier than thou bigots grumbled that Jesus' disciples ate with them.

Luke 5:32 *“The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” 31 And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”*

Jesus emphasised that his mission was to call all people to repentance. Only those who feel the need and who know that they are sinners will heed the call. Those who like the pharisees are sick but do not know it will not feel the need to respond to the offer of salvation.

Sometime later Jesus was preaching to the crowds of thousands of people who followed him.

Luke 13:1-9 *“Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? 3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” 6 And He began telling this parable: “A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. 7 And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’ 8 And he answered and said to him, ‘Let it alone, sir; for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; 9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.’”*

Here Jesus is highlighting the importance of repentance. That we have one of two choices. That we can repent or we can perish. We live in a world that is falling apart physically and socially. People are killed in accidents, die of disease, die in wars, and are murdered. This does not mean that these unfortunate people are worse sinners than the rest of humanity. But Jesus is saying that no matter who we are we will all perish unless we repent.

This repentance/change of mind is a life changing event that manifests itself in changes of thoughts, opinions and actions. A mental assent to the truth is not enough and does not constitute genuine repentance.

How do we repent? How do we obtain this transformation of mind?

Jeremiah 13:23 *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good. Who are accustomed to doing evil.”*

Clearly all humanity is accustomed to do evil and cannot repent on its own accord. First we must seek to Lord. This seeking is itself an evidence that the Holy Spirit is working on our hearts. Then Holy Spirit will slowly transform our minds and actions.

Isaiah 55:6-7 *“Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near:7 Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”*

Here we see the concept of repentance and forgiveness of sin was taught in the Old Testament by the prophet Isaiah. This repentance preceded forgiveness and was manifested in a change in behaviour and thoughts.

After the resurrection of Jesus from his grave he met with the disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem. He began to explain to them what the Old Testament scriptures had said concerning himself. He then repeated his mission to them to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the world.

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Luke 24:46-47 “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

On the day of Pentecost which was fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus the apostle Peter is preaching to the large crowd gathered in Jerusalem for the annual festival. He told them that the wicked leaders of the nation had just murdered the messiah. For centuries the Jewish nation had been waiting for the appearance of the promised messiah only to now find out that he had arrived, had been murdered, raised from the dead, and returned to heaven. Now Jerusalem would be the starting point for the Christian church and that repentance to obtain forgiveness would be preached to the whole world in his name.

Acts 2:37-38 “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

We can only imagine the fear that came over the crowd as they realised what they had done. They were pierced to the heart. This indicates that they had a change of mind about the way they thought of Jesus and regretted their actions in killing him. They now refer to the apostles as 'brethren' and ask what shall we do. The apostle Peter answers them with the gospel. He tells them to repent and be baptised for the forgiveness of sins and to receive the Holy Spirit.

Later on Peter and John were going to the Jerusalem temple at 9am, the time of the hour of prayer. Recorded here is Peter's second sermon to the crowd. He tells the people that they had murdered the prince of life and that God has raised him from the dead.

Acts 3:17-20 “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer; He has thus fulfilled. 19 Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,

Peter again preaches the gospel of repentance that is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. He also inspires them with the hope of the return of Jesus and that God's ultimate will is to be accomplished.

So great was the jealousy of the Jewish leaders towards the apostles Peter and John that they had them arrested and brought before the council. They were given strict instructions not to preach anymore in the name of Jesus. Peter and John ignored this warning and continued to teach in the name of Jesus. This caused all the apostles to be arrested this time.

Acts 5:27-32 “When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, 28 saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. 31 He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior; to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

We must obey God rather than men. When the will of God conflicts with the will of man in that instance the will of God must be done. The good news is that repentance is a gift from Jesus Christ that he grants to those people who choose to obey him.

Many years later the apostle Paul is preaching to the philosophers of Athens in ancient Greece. He is in the Areopagus which in Paul's day had become a centre for discussions on religion and morals.

Acts 17:22;29-31 “So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects...Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

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Paul is attempting to persuade the Greeks to turn away from false gods made from gold, silver or stone. Now that the gospel is going all around the world God is now declaring that all men should repent of the worship of false gods and turn to the Living God. This God has fixed a certain day in which he will judge the world through Jesus Christ.

Later after leaving Greece Paul steps off on the Island of Malta on a journey to Jerusalem. While there he contacts the elders at the church at Ephesus and asks them to come to him. When they finally arrive in Malta he greets them gives them a farewell speech as he believes that he will never see them again. Luke records his speech some of which is mentioned below.

Acts 20:18-21 *"You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Here Paul tells the Ephesian elders for the sake of posterity that his gospel was one of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance – a transformed mind that obeys God and renounces sin. Faith – believing and doing what Jesus Christ tells us.

After arriving at Jerusalem Paul is arrested. So began a long process of imprisonment and a journey that led him to the city of Rome to stand before Caesar. Paul became imprisoned in the city of Caesarea between the yrs 57-59 AD. This city was the capitol of the Roman province of Judea. While he was in prison in Caesarea he was called to give his defence in the presence of the 32 yr old King Agrippa. History records this man as being Herod Agrippa II (27-93 AD) who ruled over territory north and north-east of the sea of Galilee. [1] Paul describes to the King his former life as a devout Jew and of his conversion to Christianity. He describes how he was given a vision from Jesus while he was on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians.

Acts 26:19-20 *"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance."*

Paul attempts to persuade the King to become a Christian. He emphasises the fact that repentance is made manifest by the performance of deeds and behaviour that clearly indicate a change of mind. No repentance is genuine without a corresponding change in behaviour.

In his letter to the Christian church at Rome Paul talks about hypocrisy, condemnation and repentance.

The Impartiality of God

Romans 2:1-11 *"Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. 3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to each person according to his deeds: 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God."*

Here Paul talks about those people who condemn others and yet do the same things themselves. People who do this end up passing sentence upon themselves. If we desire to escape the judgement of God the only way is to repent. Repentance does not originate from within us. Paul says that the kindness of God leads us to repentance. God will render to each person according to his deeds. But those people who are

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stubborn and have an unrepentant heart and are evil are storing up wrath for themselves on the day of judgement. While those people who are repentant and show it by persevering in doing good show that they are seeking glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.

Romans 12:1-2 *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

Repentance that leads to eternal life is what God desires all people to do. God desires that all humanity be saved to eternal life.

2 Peter 3:9 *“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”*

Conclusion:

1. Repentance is a transformation of mind that is a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
2. Repentance to maintain a spiritual transformed mind is a lifestyle not just a one off event.
3. Without repentance we will all be condemned in the Judgement.
4. Repentance from sin is to be demonstrated by obedience to the law of God and accompanied by actions and behaviour that are an evidence of a transformed mind.

<http://www.britannica.com/place/Caesarea>

[1] <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Herod-Agrippa-II>

All bible references are taken from the New American Standard Version 1995
The Lockman Foundation.
