

## Repentance: What Is It?

*by Steve Monts*

I am sure we have all known of people who were zealous to turn their life around and obey the plan of salvation, but they quickly fell away. They understood the commands to believe, repent, confess and be baptized, or at least they thought they did. What I have often noticed is that repentance is the command they didn't understand. They didn't fully understand everything that goes into leading a repentant life. Hebrews 6:1 tells us that repentance is a first principle so therefore it must be understood before other aspects of Christianity. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia has this to say about repentance: “The term *metamelomai* (the Greek term we translate *repent*, SJM), literally signifies to have a feeling of care, concern or regret. It implies a conscious, moral separation, and a personal decision to forsake sin and to enter into fellowship with God. It is employed extensively with reference to man's turning away from sin to righteousness. There are three aspects included in repentance: godly sorrow, turning away from sin, and turning towards God. All three elements make up the necessary command to repent. Let us look to the Bible and see how it displays all three elements.

The sorrow involved in repentance must be a deep sorrow. For if you are not truly sorry you will not change. “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter” (2 Cor. 7:10-11). Paul clearly showed that their godly sorrow would be the first step of their repentance which led to salvation and a transformed life. The emotion has got to be there, for you can say you are sorry and not really be sorry. In 2 Samuel 12 David was so sorry for his sin with Bathsheba that he wrote a Psalm describing his broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51). The repentance leading to salvation requires godly sorrow.

Repentance is not just emotion; it involves action. The sinner must turn away from his sin. “Let the wicked forsake his way” (Is. 5:7). A great example of repentance happened when many “magicians” heard and believed in Christ, and then they

burned all their magic books (Acts 19:18-19). What a way to turn from sin! If we could all just burn the things that we formally practiced that were sinful! That would certainly be a way in which we would not be tempted with them anymore. O, let the wicked forsake his way!

But if all repentance involved were sorrow for sin and forsaking sin, what a miserable life it would be! We need the third element of repentance; we need to turn towards God. Judas only had the first two elements. He was certainly sorry for his sin, he turned from his sin by casting the money away from him, and, if he had to do it all over again, I firmly believe he would choose not to betray Christ. Judas' error was, instead of turning to God, turning to despair and suicide. Without the third element in repentance we would all lose hope!

We must turn to God. The Gentiles were told “that they should repent, turn to God and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20). The Thessalonians had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Th. 1:9). That is how we turn to God; we serve His ways! His ways are in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). And if we do not turn,

then it is just a matter of time until we fall away. Jesus taught a parable of a man who had rid himself of his sinful ways, but put nothing in its place. His sin returned and he became worse than he was before (Mt. 12:43-45). One must put God's ways in his life. In the book of Luke, the fifteenth chapter, we see all three elements of repentance come together. We are told of a son who wasted his livelihood in wasteful living. The son became poor and wretched to the point that he wished he could eat what the swine ate. The Bible says, "he came to himself" and

remembered how it used to be with his father. He was so sorry for his sins that he was willing to be made one of his father's servants, feeling unworthy to be his son. He forsook his ways and came to his father. He repented as the Bible teaches. The father, while seeing him in the distance, ran out to meet him. The father didn't wait there until he came all the way, but ran out to meet him. That is the great love of our God. When we, with a contrite and penitent heart, turn from our sin to God, He then reaches out to us to forgive us willingly and with great joy. "For this my son was

dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry" (Lk. 15:24). "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Lk. 15:10).

Repentance: what is it? It is the godly sorrow, the turning from sin, and turning to God; this is what saves you and pleases God. If you have not why don't you today, "repent . . . and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38)?

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## Cookstove Apostasy

*Gospel Advocate, May 30, 1935*

The early church prayed in the upper room, the twentieth century church cooks in the supper room. Today, the supper room has taken place of the upper room, play has taken the place of prayer, and feasting the place of fasting. There are more full stomachs than there are bended knees and broken hearts. There is more fire in the range in the kitchen than there is in the pulpit. When you build a fire in the church kitchen, it often puts out

the fire in the pulpit. Ice cream chills the fever of spiritual life.

The early Christians were not cooking in the supper room the day the Holy Spirit came, they were praying in the upper room, they were not waiting on tables, they were waiting on God, they were not waiting for the fire from the stove, but for the fire from above. They were detained by the command of God and not entertained by the cunning of

men. They were filled with the Holy Ghost, not stuffed with stew and roast.

Oh, I would like the cooking squad put out and the praying band let in, less ham and sham, and more heaven, less pie and more piety, less use for the cook book, and more for the Old Book. Put out the fire in the kitchen and build up the fire in the pulpit.

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