



“Repentance” ~ August 18, 2019

OPEN

What does the soon return to another school year look like for your family?

“The Three Rs” is a phrase that has long been associated with education. We can appreciate the importance of the fundamental skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Of course today in education students encounter a wide range of subjects. Similarly, there are many truths for the follower of Jesus to discover in the Kingdom of God. For the next weeks we will learn about and lean into four essential aspects of our life in Christ. We will consider: **repentance reconciliation regeneration reciprocity**

Today our topic is repentance. Henry C. Thiessen makes this comment, “*Repentance is essentially a change of mind...It has, however, three aspects: and intellectual, an emotional, and a volitional aspect....This implies a change of view...a change of feeling...a change of will, disposition, and purpose.*” (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*, W. B. Eerdmans, 1949, 269)

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[1] Repentance is essential - a change of view

Why is repentance is so important? One answer is found in **II Peter 3:8-13**. Repentance is a truth that can be traced throughout God’s redemptive plan.

Prophecy - In many Old Testament passages we have a powerful call to repentance, which must be a wholehearted, authentic response to God - **Joel 2:12-13**

Preparation - What was the essence of John the Baptist’s mission of preparing the way before Jesus? It was to call people to repent - **Luke 3:1-3**

Proclamation - At the launch of Jesus’ earthly ministry of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, the first call He gave was to repentance - **Matthew 4:17**

Power - In the early days of the Body of Christ the message of the resurrection was proclaimed, and in light of it, the call was to repent - **Acts 2:38, 11:18, 20:20**

Isaiah 30:18 assures us that “The Lord waits to be gracious to you...blessed are all those who wait for Him.”

[2] Repentance is experiential - a change of feeling

Romans 2:4 teaches us that it is actually God’s kindness which leads us to repent. How does this happen? The Holy Spirit **convicts** which means we

acknowledge our sin. He also enables us to **confess** which means we **agree** with God’s view of our sin. In this context repentance occurs as we authentically turn away from our sin and turn to God. Repentance involves feeling – but it is not merely a feeling. In **Loving God** Charles Colson gives 3 reasons why “repentance [is] so seldom preached and so little understood.”

1. *The appeal of modern evangelism is not for repentance but for enlistment*
2. *Unwillingness to accept the reality of personal sin and need to repent*
3. *Our culture has written sin out of existence*

[3] Repentance is expanding - a change of will, disposition, purpose

In so many minds, repentance is only *turning away* from what is wrong or evil. Naturally this sounds **restricting**. But repentance is also *turning to* something! Chinese philosopher Mencius said, “*Before a man can do things there must be things he will not do.*” Eugene Peterson began discussing repentance with this quote in **A Long Obedience in the Same Direction**. Read **Psalm 120**, a lament of God’s people who are being welcomed into repentance.

Peterson writes, “A person has to get fed up with ways of the world before he, before she, acquires an appetite for the world of grace....Christian consciousness begins in the painful realization that what we had assumed was the truth was in fact a lie....The first step toward God is a step away from the lies of the world....The usual biblical word describing the no we say to the world’s lies and the yes we say to God’s truth is *repentance*....Repentance, the first word in Christian immigration, sets us on the way to travelling in the light. It is a rejection that is also an acceptance, a leaving that develops into an arriving, a no to the world that is a yes to God.” (24,27,29,33)

REFLECT

- What causes you to fast, weep, and mourn before God?
- Are you frustrated about emotional inconvenience caused by guilt?
- Are you angry at personal failure and lack of ability to avoid sin?

If so, you are becoming aware of and are invited to acknowledge your sin in humble repentance to God.

Mickey Cohen, notorious gangster in Los Angeles during the 1940’s and 50’s made a decision to follow Jesus through the ministry of Billy Graham. However, he was confused and thought he could be a “Christian gangster”! Charles Colson writes, “in voicing his comical, outrageous, poignant question “What’s the matter with being a Christian gangster?” Cohen was echoing the millions of professing Christians who, though unwilling to admit it, through their very lives pose the same question. Not about being Christian gangsters, but about being Christianized versions of whatever they already are – and are determined to remain. C. S. Lewis called these hybrids “hyphenated Christians.” And, like Mickey, we cannot love God – cannot obey Him – and remain what we are. We must repent.” (**Loving God**, 94)