

“REPENTANCE”

in the New Testament.

I think the NUMBER ONE problem in experiencing a truly changed life when becoming a Christian is a misunderstanding of REPENTANCE.

There is great difficulty in expressing the true idea of a change of thought with reference to sin when we translate the New Testament “repentance” into other languages.

A source of the modern-day confusion lies in the history of the word. We get “repent” from the Latin word *repenitere* and the Latin translation of the Bible uses *poenitentiam agere* which actually signifies pain, grief, or distress, rather than a change of thought or purpose. (We also get our English word “penitentiary” from this Latin root.)

Adding to the confusion, some have taught that Jesus and the Apostles urged people to do penance (*poenitentiam agite*), presenting grief over sin rather than abandonment of sin as the primary idea of repentance.

But the words of the ancient prophets, of Jesus, and of the Apostles show that the change of mind is the dominant idea. Grief and sorrow enter the experience (and rightly so!) as one realizes just how offensive and disrespectful their sinful thoughts and behavior are in to God! Originally written in Greek, there are different words used that are translated into English as “repent” and “repentance.” The basic words are:

1. μεταμέλομαι (metamélomai)
Literally, it means “to care,” “be concerned.” It means to have a feeling of care, concern or regret; it expresses the emotional aspect of repentance.

This feeling MAY lead to genuine repentance, OR it may simply result in mere remorse (Matt. 21:29, 21:32, 27:3). Judas repented only in the sense of remorse (or regret), and not in the sense of the abandonment of sin. It’s kind of like being sorry, but only sorry you got caught.

2. μετανοέω (metanoéo)
Literally, it means “to change the mind.” In “metanoéo,” we find the true New Testament idea of the spiritual change in a sinner’s return to God. The term signifies “to turn,” “to have another mind.” It is to change your opinion or purpose with regard to sin. This is the teaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38).

“Metaneo” is intimately associated with different aspects of spiritual transformation and the Christian life:
Faith (Acts 20:21)
Conversion (Acts 3:19)
Forgiveness of sin (Luke 24:47)

“Metaneo” is joined with water baptism, where baptism was a public act proclaiming a changed relation to sin and God (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; Acts 19:4).

When repentance is a true, Biblical experience, its reality is shown by producing “good fruits” appropriate to the new spiritual life (Matt. 3:8). No fruit? No true repentance. It’s up to us to judge ourselves.

3. Another word used that pictures the positive change resulting from true repentance is

ἐπιστρέπω (epistrépo).

Literally, it means “to turn over,” “to turn upon,” “to turn unto.” It’s used to indicate the positive aspect of turning to God, with turning from sin as the negative aspect. (Acts 9:35; 1Thes. 1:9; Acts 11:21; Acts 26:20). These two aspects of “turning to” and “turning from” are absolutely inseparable. You can’t have one without the other! You cannot have Christ and at the same time continue in your sin. (Note: Occasional, unplanned, impulsive acts of sin are far different from “continuing” in sin, essentially a lifestyle of sin. (Also see 1 John 3:9. Repentance is not mentioned here, but the idea of “continuing” in sin is.)

So, when I see people placing their faith and trust in Jesus Christ only to continue in their lifestyle of sex outside of marriage, or use of pornography, drugs, profanity, gossip, and other repeated sins, I suspect there's really not been any true, Biblical repentance.

Perhaps I can best illustrate this by describing how I think repentance is "worked out" in our lives. I compare becoming a Christian with getting married. When I was (or your were) single, in an earthly sense we were free to pursue various "lovers." In a spiritual sense, our "lover" was some sort of sin, even an addiction. But when we got married, we entered into an exclusive relationship with our spouse – no more other lovers! When we're joined to Christ, we enter into an exclusive relationship – no more other lovers! As a Christian, when we sin (when we pursue other lovers), we are committing spiritual adultery! Repentance is giving up the right to other lovers!

A ONE-TIME ACT or ON-GOING?

Do we repent one time when we're "saved" and not have to worry about it any more?

In turning to Christ, we must break the ties with our sins and become "wed" to Christ. When we begin our relationship with Christ, we begin our LIFESTYLE OF REPENTANCE.

When Jesus said, *"But unless you repent, you too will all perish"* (Luke 13:3,5), and when He commanded us to *"Repent and believe the Gospel"* (Mark 1:15), He was NOT telling us to do this once! He was telling us to repent and keep on repenting! (This is very clear in the grammar of the original Greek – it's present tense, indicating an on-going practice.)

The LIFESTYLE of the maturing Christian is one of repentance. As God points out new areas of sin in our lives, along with confession (see 1John 1:8-10), our only proper response is repentance and the works demonstrating true repentance! (See Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20.)

"The time has come! The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Gospel!" (Jesus, in Mark 1:15)

The Gospel is the GOOD NEWS that

"...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day..."
-1st Corinthians 15:3-4

To believe in the Gospel is to trust in Jesus' work as an acceptable sacrifice for your sin - acceptable to God, that He would see fit to adopt you into the family of God.

"...He gave the right to become children of God to those who believe on His name."
-John 1:12

We begin our journey into our new life in Christ with the first step:

There is no magic prayer, no special words. After all, you're only responding to what Jesus has already done!

- ♥ Thank Him for dying for your sins,
- ♥ Declare that you're turning from your sin and turning to Him,
- ♥ Thank Him for rising from the dead so you can have a new life, and
- ♥ Believe on Him, trust Him, and receive Him into your life and be your Lord (your Master) and your Savior.

If you do these things from a sincere heart, I know God will honor your sincerity. The only thing you'll regret about it is that you didn't respond to Christ sooner!

"REPENTANCE"

For those who want to get serious about Christianity.



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