

Repentance Mark 1:14-15

John the Baptist came preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. After John had been put into prison Jesus likewise came preaching that the time was fulfilled and that the Kingdom of God was at hand. The message of Jesus was similar to that of John. It was repent and believe in the gospel.

While many people dispute the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins, few would dispute the necessity of repentance for the remission of sins. If we look at the construction of the phrases found in Mark 1:4 and Acts 2:38 we find much in common. In Mark 1:4 we find "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" and in Acts 2:38 we find "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins". Much controversy has surrounded the meaning of the little Greek word "eis" which is translated into the English as "for". Does it mean because of, or in order to? To be more precise, are we baptized because our sins are forgiven, or in order to have our sins forgiven? I think a lot of the controversy could be eliminated if we looked at Mark 1:4, a passage with a very similar sentence structure to Acts 2:38. If the Greek word "eis" means because of, then we would have to conclude that we repent because our sins are forgiven. Yet, we know from the scripture that repentance is commanded as a prerequisite to salvation (Luke 13:3, 5). Perhaps we should look more closely at the necessity of repentance and baptism.

When Jesus began His ministry it was with the message of repentance coupled with a belief in the gospel. Wherever the gospel is preached repentance will also be preached. This is one of the basic truths of the Christian faith!

There are several passages in the New Testament that show to us the absolute necessity of repentance. In Matthew 9:9-13 we find the calling of Matthew, the tax collector. When Jesus sat down in Matthew's house many tax collectors and sinners also came. The Pharisees were offended because of these circumstances and complained to the other disciples. Jesus taught them that the only people who should go see a doctor are those who are sick. He then called their attention to an obscure passage in the Old Testament (Hosea 6:6) to show that God had always wanted more than outward obedience. Then He exclaimed, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance".

Jesus elaborated on repentance in the parable of the two sons found in Matthew 21:28-32. He proclaimed to the self-righteous that tax collectors and sinners would enter the kingdom of God before them because the tax collectors and sinners were willing to repent. A similar remark is found in Luke 15:1-32 where the Pharisees once again complained about Jesus receiving and eating with sinners. Jesus proceeded to tell three parables, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. In each of these parables joy is manifested when what was lost is found.

When Jesus sent the twelve out to preach, their commission was to preach that people should repent (Mark 6:7-13). Jesus Himself emphasized repentance in Luke 13:1-5 where He commands it not once, but twice! In Luke 24:44-49, when Jesus was giving His disciples their final instructions prior to His ascension back to Heaven, He specifically stated "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations" (verse 47). We can certainly see that repentance and remission of sins are

inseparably linked by the words of the Messiah. As Peter later would write, God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Repentance was a vital theme of the first gospel sermons. In Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; and 20:21 repentance is found. In Acts 3:19, Peter said, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord". Notice the order outlined by Peter, repentance precedes conversion. Repentance also precedes sins being blotted out and times of refreshing coming from the Lord. This passage sheds more light upon the passage found in Mark 1:4 and helps us understand the necessity of both repentance and baptism. In Romans 2:4, the Apostle Paul tells us "the goodness of God leads you to repentance".

Repentance furnishes the soil for the Kingdom of God. Sometimes the soil was hard. Communities were held responsible during the ministry of Christ. In Matthew 11:20 Jesus rebukes the towns of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum because they refused to repent. Jesus used the example of the citizens of Nineveh (Jonah chapters 3 and 4) to urge people to repent (Matthew 12:41).

Repentance involves being sorry for sin. The Apostle Paul commended the Corinthian church because their sorrow over sin led to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9). Jesus contrasted the self-righteous prayer of the Pharisee with the humble prayer of the tax collector, who would not even lift his eyes to heaven, but rather said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Luke 18:9-14). Yet, repentance is more than just being sorry for sin. It must include a resolute will to sin no more. It must include a complete change of mind. Repentance must be a transformation rather than a reformation. The writer of the

book of Hebrews gives as an example the life of Esau, who wept bitterly after losing his inheritance but without repentance (Hebrews 12:15-17).

There can be no repentance without faith. A person who does not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God would have no purpose in repenting. Repentance is faith in operation. Faith is repentance in prospect. You cannot expect one without the other. We commonly teach that people must be born again through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism as if they were one-time affairs. Nothing could be further from the truth! Repentance is not a one-time experience. Paul instructed Timothy to "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2). What the church needs today is some good strong teaching on repentance.

We need to examine the lives of some heroes of repentance. Men like David, the King of Israel. We know that David was a mighty man of God, but he also was a sinner in many ways. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed in an attempt to cover it up. Yet, David is revered as a man of God and rightly so. How is this possible? It is possible because of repentance. One only has to read Psalm 51 to see the true repentance of David. Another hero of repentance is Peter. The man who resolutely said he would never desert Jesus and later denied Him three times is the same man who stood up with the other Apostles on the Day of Pentecost and preached the first gospel sermon. How was this possible? It was possible because of repentance.

Repentance is one of the basic truths of the Christian faith. It is a command of the Lord. He reminded the lukewarm church of Laodicea that they must "Be zealous therefore and repent" (Revelation 3:19). In fact, Jesus gave the command to repent to the

churches of Ephesus (Revelation 2:5), Pergamos (Revelation 2:16), Thyatira (Revelation 2:21), and Sardis (Revelation 3:3) as well. We should take warning from these first century churches. If they who were so close in time to Jesus and the Apostles needed to repent, surely we need to repent!