

# The Doctrines of Salvation: Repentance

from *Great Doctrines of the Bible* by William Evans

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## A. REPENTANCE.

### I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE.

The prominence given to the doctrine of Repentance in the Scriptures can hardly be overestimated. John the Baptist began his public ministry, as did Jesus also, with the call to repentance upon his lips (Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17).

When Jesus sent forth the twelve and the seventy messengers to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of heaven, He commanded them to preach repentance (Luke 24:47; Mark 6:12).

Foremost in the preaching of the apostles was the doctrine of repentance; Peter, (Acts 2:38); Paul, (Acts 20:21).

The burden of the heart of God, and His one command to all men everywhere, is that they should repent (2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 17:30).

Indeed, failure on the part of man to heed God's call to repentance means that he shall utterly perish (Luke 13:3).

Does the doctrine of repentance find such a prominent place in the preaching and teaching of today? Has the need for repentance diminished? Has God lessened or changed the terms of admission into His kingdom?

### II. THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE.

There is a three-fold idea involved in true repentance:

#### 1. AS TOUCHING THE INTELLECT.

Matt. 21:29—"He answered and said: I will not; but afterward he repented, and went". The word here used for "repent" means to change one's mind, thought, purpose, views regarding a matter; it is to have another mind about a thing. So we may speak of it as a revolution touching our attitude and views towards sin and righteousness. This change is well illustrated in the action of the Prodigal Son, and of the Publican in the well-known story of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 15 and 18). Thus, when Peter, on the day of Pentecost, called upon the Jews to repent (Acts 2:14-40), he virtually called upon them to change their minds and their views regarding Christ. They had

considered Christ to be a mere man, a blasphemer, an impostor. The events of the few preceding days had proven to them that He was none other than the righteous Son of God, their Saviour and the Saviour of the world. The result of their repentance or change of mind would be that they would receive Jesus Christ as their long promised Messiah.

## **2. AS TOUCHING THE EMOTIONS.**

2 Cor. 7:9—"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing." The context (v. 7-11) shows what a large part the feelings played in true Gospel repentance. See also Luke 10:13; cf. Gen. 6:6. The Greek word for repentance in this connection means "to be a care to one afterwards," to cause one great concern. The Hebrew equivalent is even stronger, and means to pant, to sigh, to moan. So the publican "beat upon his breast," indicating sorrow of heart. Just how much emotion is necessary to true repentance no one can definitely say. But that a certain amount of heart movement, even though it be not accompanied with a flood of tears, or even a single tear, accompanies all true repentance is evident from the use of this word. See also Psa. 38:18.

## **3. AS TOUCHING THE WILL AND DISPOSITION.**

One of the Hebrew words for repent means "to turn." The prodigal said, "I will arise ... and he arose" (Luke 15:18, 20). He not only thought upon his ways, and felt sorry because of them, but he turned his steps in the direction of home. So that in a very real sense repentance is a crisis with a changed experience in view. Repentance is not only a heart broken *for* sin, but *from* sin also. We must forsake what we would have God remit. In the writings of Paul repentance is more of an experience than a single act. The part of the will and disposition in repentance is shown:

### **a) In the Confession of Sin to God.**

Psa. 38:18—"For I will declare mine iniquity: I will be sorry for my sin." The publican beat upon his breast, and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). The prodigal said, "I have sinned against heaven" (Luke 15:21).

There must be confession to man also in so far as man has been wronged in and by our sin (Matt. 5:23, 24; James 5:16).

### **b) In the Forsaking of Sin.**

Isa. 55:7—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man

his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord." Prov. 28:13; Matt. 3:8, 10.

### **c) In Turning Unto God.**

It is not enough to turn away from sin; we must turn unto God; 1 Thess. 1:9; Acts 26:18.

## **III. HOW REPENTANCE IS PRODUCED.**

### **1. IT IS A DIVINE GIFT.**

Acts 11:18—"Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." 2 Tim. 2:25—"If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Acts 5:30, 31. Repentance is not something which one can originate within himself, or can pump up within himself as one would pump water out of a well. It is a divine gift. How then is man responsible for not having it? We are called upon to repent in order that we may feel our own inability to do so, and consequently be thrown upon God and petition Him to perform this work of grace in our hearts.

### **2. YET THIS DIVINE GIFT IS BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH THE USE OF MEANS.**

Acts 2:37, 38, 41. The very Gospel which calls for repentance produces it. How well this is illustrated in the experience of the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10)! When they heard the preaching of the word of God by Jonah they believed the message and turned unto God. Not any message, but the Gospel is the instrument that God uses to bring about this desired end. Furthermore, this message must be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5-10).

Rom. 2:4—"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Also 2 Pet. 3:9. Prosperity too often leads away from God, but it is the divine intention that it should lead to God. Revivals come mostly in times of panic.

Rev. 3:19; Heb. 12:6, 10, 11. The chastisements of God are sometimes for the purpose of bringing His wandering children back to repentance.

2 Tim. 2:24, 25. God oftentimes uses the loving, Christian reproof of a brother to be the means of bringing us back to God.

## **IV. THE RESULTS OF REPENTANCE.**

### **1. ALL HEAVEN IS MADE GLAD.**

Luke 15:7, 10. Joy in heaven, and in the presence of the angels of God. Makes glad the heart of God, and sets the bells of heaven ringing. Who are those "in the presence of the angels of God"? Do the departed loved ones know anything about it?

## **2. IT BRINGS PARDON AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN.**

Isa. 55:7; Acts 3:19. Outside of repentance the prophets and apostles know of no way of securing pardon. No sacrifices, nor religious ceremonies can secure it. Not that repentance merits forgiveness, but it is a condition of it. Repentance qualifies a man for a pardon, but it does not entitle him to it.

## **3. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS POURED OUT UPON THE PENITENT.**

Acts 2:38—"Repent ... and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Impenitence keeps back the full in coming of the Spirit into the heart.

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