
The Lost Doctrine of Our Day

Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.

WHAT a superficial world we are living in! The religious realm has not escaped such condition. The reason repentance is abandoned by both militant conservatives and the destructive liberals alike is due to its being so distasteful to this a self-satisfied generation. You can join a local church with less questions asked than any lodge in town. The standards of many churches are lower than the Pink Lemonade Society that meets every second Tuesday of each week.

When repentance is preached, the automatic consequence is healthy converts. Solid results follow, with robust Christians living a Spirit-filled life, bringing glory to God in winning souls to Christ. Where is the prophetic cry, "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" (Jeremiah 4:3). This generation has lost its sense of sin and gives salaries to preachers to "prophecy smooth things" (Isaiah 30:10).

Today we have spiritual renewals that produce shallow results because of shallow preaching against sin, and the lack of demand of turning from that which is unholy to forgiveness and cleansing. The holiness of God has little impact upon the sinner. Without a revelation of the Holy Spirit, we hear few cries of, "Woe is me, for I am undone." Today we are making decisions and responding to the pressure of the speaker's invitation rather than having the Holy Spirit disturb our conscience and break our heart in the realization of sin before a holy God. The prodigal returned in sorrow of heart, willing to confess his sin before his earthly and heavenly father (Luke 15:18). The sinner must repent before he can be restored to fellowship with an offended God. The Bible sends out the message of repentance loud and clear.

Its Significance

The word "repent" in its various forms occurs 45 times in the Old Testament. It is used nearly 600 times in the New Testament. John the Baptizer and Christ Himself gave real emphasis to this demand. Today few professing Christians are willing to become aroused about this matter. Blinded and intoxicated with worldliness, which produces indifference, they refuse to hear the clear call from the Bible, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." How dare we change the message of the prophets and the apostles? Is it any wonder that we have so many superficial Christians, untouched by the Holy Spirit? Their daily conduct reflects a lack of separation from this present worldly system.

Definition

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Psalms 119:59, 60). Repentance means to go the opposite way and to do opposite action, based upon deep sorrow and remorse for and abhorrence of sin. Such change of conduct is the consequence of a revelation of a holy and righteous God.

METANOEO. This word means to change one's mind, always for the better. A change of life-style is involved. It is used in the imperative: "And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2) "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

This word does not mean a mere forsaking of sin, but a change of one's attitude regarding it. It occurs 34 times – a change of mind. Repentance is not only sorrow for sin, it refers to a moral judgment of self in the presence of the holiness of God. Our conscience is awakened to the reality of sin and the abandonment of it. Is it any wonder we have churches filled with mental ascent to a historical Jesus? Where is the demand of a change of attitude toward sin heard today?

METAMELOMAI. This further word implies "regret." This "after sorrow" occurs five times, expressing regret with little reference to sin. "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season" (II Corinthians 7:8). Judas was deep in remorse, but it was not saving repentance. "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. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Corinthians 7:9, 10).

The New Testament use of the word declares unchangeableness of God's action (Romans 11:29; Hebrews 7:21). Remember, it is impossible for an unsaved person to exercise godly sorrow. He is ungodly. Nothing godly can come from our ungodliness. Repentance is the gift of God. (Discussed later.)

METANOIA. This word signifies a real change of mind and attitude toward sin itself and the cause of it, not merely the consequence. It is a change in our course of action, which is the exact opposite of previous action. It appears some 24 times, expressing a real and genuine repentance toward God. It is associated with the Holy Spirit and is connected with the remission of sins and the provision of salvation.

Source of Repentance

Where does it come from? How is it produced? Be assured it is not the consequence of some penitential act or meritorious action on our part. It is a free gift from God. It

is not produced by threats of divine wrath or judgment, but by the goodness of God. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

Repentance is the gift of God and is not the work of an unbelieving man. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Savior, for to GIVE repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles GRANTED repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will GIVE them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (II Timothy 2:25). From the above verses you have learned it is the gift of the Risen Savior and God Himself. It is part of God's marvelous grace: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is THE GIFT OF GOD. Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

Repentance is always connected with faith, but a separate course of action. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). They are inseparable and both are demanded by God and provided by His grace. That which God demands, by divine enablement we can and must exercise. Faith is also a gift as clearly stated in Ephesians 2:8,9 (previously given). Repentance and faith do not save us. Christ is the world's only Savior. These two exercises move us in the position whereby God can accomplish His work in us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, our repentance is toward God. He is the One against whom we are rebelling.

Time for Sinners to Repent!

We deal first with our sins prior to any reaction or response to the Savior. God has classified all of us as sinners, lost, condemned and under His wrath this instant. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God (present tense) abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Restitution is part of repentance. Are you sorry enough for your sin to repay those from whom you have stolen? To make amends for the contemptible actions toward the people who still live with the memory of you? This was the action of the prodigal son as well as Zacchaeus. Hear him state, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if (since) I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8).

God's pardon is on the basis of repentance. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings

from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:16-18). The greatest difficulty in being forgiven is not believing in God's provision. It is being honest about our sin, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. Not many people are willing to be exposed as they really are in the sight of a holy God. Until they are willing to repent of their personal sin, a holy God will never allow His Holy Spirit to reveal a holy God, Who in turn will reveal His holy Son as a satisfactory provision for their eternal welfare in His holy presence.

Friend, find a place of prayer and cry out to God, naming your sin to Him. The real turn is not FROM your sin, but a turn TO GOD, acknowledging what you really are in His sight. God will hear your cry and keep His promise. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). You will repent of your sin or live in conscious torment throughout eternity in hell. God calls it "perishing." "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

The Word of God (the Bible) reveals your actual condition. Better get it open! Find a church that is teaching it. Read your Bible. The first five chapters of Romans is God's report about your sin and His provision for it.

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