Tuesday's Touch

...from Pastor Ed ...February 24, 2009

Repentance unto Life

(please read Luke 18:18-23)

Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish. John 15:5

...you turned from idols to God to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven... 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

...that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations... Luke 24:47

...God has granted to the gentiles repenatance unto life. Acts 11:18

Repentance is an integral and indispensable element of saving faith. From John the Baptist, through Jesus, unto the Apostles, all preached a message that could be summed up as "Repent and believe the gospel!" (Matt. 3:4, 4:17, 9:13, **Mark 1:4**, 1:15, Luke 13:3, 15:10, 24:47, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, 11:18, 17:30, Acts 20:21, Acts 26:20, Romans 2:4, 2 Tim. 2:25, 2 Peter 3:9, et al) But when it comes to specifying exactly what *repentance* is, we find that it is often marginalized by statements like, "Just admit you're a sinner," or "Just be sorry for your sins." On the other hand, some demand that sinners have a deep emotional sorrow, weeping as they "confess all their sins." These statements, can be confusing, and even detrimental to one's understanding of the Gospel call.

The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia,* and its associated forms, and has the basic meaning of a change of one's mind about something. And truly, in repentance we have a change of mind about God... about sin... about Jesus Christ. But it is not our *emotional response* to this change that is inherent in repentance. Some people come to Christ weeping at their sinfulness, but others may come with deep joy at hearing the *Good News.*

In the broad biblical context *repentance* is repeatedly linked to the **resultant change in direction** taken by the one who repents. In other words, ***repentance is a fundamental change of heart and mind that produces a change of action or direction.*** It is **not** the resultant actions, themselves, but the turning of the will to act *in accordance with an inner change of heart.*

Now, much of today's gospel is about just admitting that you are a sinner, and saying a prayer to "ask Jesus into your heart." People are told that if they said "the sinner's prayer" they are saved and must never doubt it. But Jesus challenges, "*Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do the things I say?*"[Lk.6:46] He sternly warns, "*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not... done many wonderful things in your name?... And I will*

declare, 'I never knew you; depart from Me...'"[Matt.7:22-23] *And so, we are called to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith* [2 Cor.13:5] *and to make our calling and election sure.*[2 Pet 1:10]

It is precisely at this point where a biblical understanding of repentance is crucial. ***Repentance is an inseparable part of saving faith,*** *being the gift of God.* [Eph.2:8 2Ti.2:25] *Such repentance effectually works from within as we believe upon Christ, turning our will to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is precisely what the rich young ruler's "faith" was lacking in Luke 18:18-23. When Jesus told him to sell all, give to the poor, and follow Him, our Lord said he was lacking* ***one thing****- not two or three (vs.22). It was the willingness to follow Jesus that he lacked. What was preventing him was his love for his possessions (covetousness). He said he had kept all the commandments (vs.21), but Jesus clearly exposes his gross failure regarding the tenth commandment-* ***his covetousness kept him from following the Lord.***

When anyone comes to Christ, he/she is not asked to remember and confess every sin- a complete impossibility. But, as saving faith dawns, there are at least two aspects of sin that must be dealt with - the sin of not having lived life for God's glory, with Him at the center, and then whatever stands in the way of ***turning to following*** *Christ. It's not about cleaning ourselves up to come , but it is about* ***being made willing to turn and follow*** *regardless the cost.* [Luke 14:26-25] *It may be love of possessions or pleasures, fear of rejection or ridicule by friends and family, or refusal to yield up control of one's life. Whatever it is, the believer* ***must*** *repent, turning to follow Jesus. In all true salvation, the effectual grace of God will always accomplish this. Matt.10:37-39; Luke 14:16-34; 1 Cor.6:9-11; Titus 2:11-14 As we continue walking with Christ we will be brought to ongoing repentance concerning the vestiges of sin yet in us. Inherantly, repentance unto life leads to a life of repentance.*

Lord God,
Search us and try us that we might make our calling and election sure. May we repent of proclaiming a half gospel which has promoted spurious faith and has given many false assurance as they continue in darkness. May we fully trust the power of the gospel to accomplish the full work of regeneration to the salvation of sinners.
Amen

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