

# REPENTANCE

## I. Representative Biblical references to "repentance"

Matt. 4:17 - "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"

Mk. 1:15 - "Repent, and believe the gospel"

Lk. 24:47 - "repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name"

Acts 2:38 - "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins"

Acts 3:19 - "repent and be converted, that your sins might be wiped away"

Acts 5:31 - "to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins"

Acts 11:18 - "granted to the Gentiles also the repentance unto life"

Acts 17:30 - "God is declaring to men that all everywhere should repent"

Acts 20:21 - "repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ"

Acts 26:20 - "repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance"

II Cor. 7:9,10 - "sorrowful to point of repentance...sorrow according to God produces repentance without regret, leading to salvation"

II Cor. 12:21 - "have not repented of impurity, immorality and sensuality"

II Tim. 2:25 - "God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth"

Heb. 6:1 - "repentance from dead works and faith toward God"

II Pet. 3:9 - "Lord...not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance"

Rev. 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19 - "repent"

## II. Developing a definition of "repentance"

### A. Greek words

1. *metanoia, metaneo* (all of the references cited above)

a. from *meta*=with; *nous*=mind

b. meaning - "change of mind"

2. *metamelomai*

a. from *meta*=with; *melei*=to care

b. meaning - "remorse, regret" (cf. Matt. 27:3; II Cor. 7:8)

### B. English word "repentance"

1. Etymologically derived from Latin *repaenitere*

a. from *re*=again; *paenitere*=to be sorry, penitent, to grieve

b. meaning - "to be sorry, grieving, penitent, remorseful

c. emphasis more on grief over sin, rather than change from (or abandonment) of sin

2. Latin word is not an exact equivalent to the meaning of the Greek word, thus creating imprecise English word

3. Idea of penitence later led to concept of penance in Roman Catholic practices

a. acts of confession, restitution, mortification, self-abasement

b. to demonstrate remorse, sorrow, regret

c. in order to receive forgiveness and absolution of guilt

### C. Repentance is best defined as "a change of mind that leads to a change of action" - cf. Acts 26:20; Matt. 3:8

1. Misunderstandings and misemphases

a. "change of mind"

(1) cognitive change of opinion; "second-thoughts"

(2) emotional abhorrence, contrition, sorrow, regret, remorse

(3) self-reproach; must "die to self"

b. "change of action"

(1) self-generated activation of character and activity

- (2) resolution to amendment of activities; to do better
  - (3) behavior modification; reformation
2. Clarification of the "changes" in "repentance"
- a. "change of mind"
    - (1) about sin - "I have contravened His character"
    - (2) about oneself - "I am unworthy before God" -Lk. 18:13
    - (3) about our attitudes and mind-set - "My thoughts are inconsistent with His thoughts" (cf. Isa. 55:8,9)
    - (4) about our course of action - "I am unable to generate and enact the character of God;" "I can't...."
    - (5) about Christ - "He can express His worthy character through my attitudes and behavior;" "He can..."
  - b. "change of action"
    - (1) "Henceforth I want Christ to express His character in my behavior;" "I will let Him..."
    - (2) Desire and determination to allow for the receptivity of His activity in our lives - Faith
      - (a) repentance and faith are indivisibly and integrally connected. (cf. Mk. 1:15; Acts 20:21; 26:18,20; Heb. 6:1)
      - (b) repentance and faith are so interdependent upon the other that the use of one implies the other. There is no faith without repentance, and there is no repentance without faith.
      - (c) repentance and faith are two sides of one coin
  - c. internal, psychological dynamics of such "changes"
    - (1) Mind - change of attitude, opinion, belief
    - (2) Emotions - godly sorrow, remorse, regret
    - (3) Will - decision, determination or disposition that invokes God's deity; not mere human resolve or effort
    - (4) The combination of the above constitute repentance/faith
  - d. completeness of such "change"
    - (1) repentance is decisive and determinative
    - (2) repentance is a radical, total break, a 180° turn
    - (3) disallows for repetitiveness
      - (a) not constant reoccurring change of mind; second-thoughts; fickleness; "sorry about that;" ask forgiveness and gloss over
      - (b) regenerative repentance cannot reoccur (Heb. 6:6)
3. Can God repent?
- a. Many O.T. references to "repentance" refer to God (KJV)
    - Exod. 32:14 - "the Lord repented of the evil He thought to do"
    - Jere. 26:13,19 - "the Lord repented of the evil He pronounced"
    - Jonah 3:10 - "God repented of the evil that He would do"
  - b. Can God have a change of mind that leads to a change of action?
    - (1) God is immutable - His character never changes.
    - (2) God is not fickle - changing His mind and reneging
      - Numb. 23:19 - "God is not a son of man, that He should repent"

I Sam 15:29 - "He is not a man that He should repent"

- (3) God can, has, and does change His mind about His course of action, without impinging upon His character.

### III. Contexts of "repentance"

#### A. Regenerative repentance - initial repentance

1. Is repentance a necessary or essential condition for regeneration or conversion?
  - a. believing gospel - Mk. 1:15
  - b. forgiveness of sins - Lk. 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31
  - c. spiritual life - Acts 11:18
  - d. knowledge of the truth - II Tim. 2:25
2. Repentance is not a human "work" or achievement that creates any causal contingencies upon God, or has any meritorious benefit before God.
  - a. To avoid any possible acceptance of misdefined repentance, some have over-reacted by denying that repentance is in any way a condition of regeneration.
  - b. This led to the "Lordship salvation" controversy in evangelical theological circles.
    - (1) argument over insertions in *ordo salutis*
    - (2) both sides misunderstand dynamic of gospel
      - (a) repentance viewed as either just a "change of mind" or as a psychological reaction leading to behavior modification.
      - (b) faith viewed as either just cognitive mental assent and belief of facts, or as commitment and dedication leading to pietistic behavior change.
  3. Repentance/faith is an essential condition of Christian conversion and regeneration.
    - a. A convert changes his mind and rejects the world's ways, in order to receive the way of Christ.
    - b. In some Christian groups a new convert is identified as a "repenter"
    - c. Is it possible that some who call themselves "Christians" have assented to Christ (signed on), but have never repented?

#### B. Sanctifying repentance - continual process of repentance in Christian life

1. Repentance within the Christian life

II Cor. 7:9,10 - "repentance without regret, leading to salvation"  
II Cor. 12:21 - "repented of impurity, immorality and sensuality"  
II Pet. 3:9 - "God wishes all to come to repentance"  
Rev. 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19 - "repent"
2. Continued necessity for decisive repentance
  - a. In the "renewing of the mind" process we allow for the grace-prompting of God unto repentance (cf. Rom. 12:2)
    - (1) change of mind and action concerning our pride, prejudices, self-protection, false identities, etc.
    - (2) transformation of mind-set and behavior
  - b. Thereby the Spirit overcomes the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:16-24)

#### C. Collective ecclesiastical repentance? - cf. II Chron. 7:14