

Repentance to Salvation

How shall a man be just with YHWH? How shall the sinner be made righteous? It is through the Messiah that we can be brought into harmony with YHWH, with holiness; but how are we to come to the Messiah? Many are asking the same question as did the multitude on the day of Pentecost, when, convinced of sin, they cried out, "What shall we do?" The first word of Peter's answer was, "Repent" (Acts 2:37,38).

Repentance includes sorrow for sin and turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.

According to the Bible, repentance involves more than changing one's mind when salvation is an issue. On the day of Pentecost, because of Peter's preaching, many became convinced they were sinners and were *pricked in their heart*. They asked "*what shall we do?*" Peter told them to *Repent, and be baptized* (Acts 2:36-38). Neither being convinced of being a sinner nor being pricked in their heart is repentance. Both are prerequisites to it. Otherwise, Peter would not have commanded those who were *pricked in their heart* to repent.

When the people on the day of Pentecost were *pricked in their heart*, they were experiencing godly sorrow, the remorse one feels when he realizes he has sinned against YHWH, has become alienated from YHWH, and is spiritually lost: *For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death* (2 Cor. 7:10). One whose repentance grows out of godly sorrow does not regret having repented. One whose repentance grows out of any other motive or sentiment has not pleased YHWH.

We need to distinguish godly sorrow, which produces genuine repentance, from mere regret, which does not. There are many who fail to understand the true nature of repentance. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the bible sense. They lament the suffering rather than the sin. Such was the grief of Esau when he saw that the birthright was lost to him forever. Balaam, terrified by the angel standing in his pathway with

drawn sword, acknowledged his guilt lest he should lose his life; but there was no genuine repentance for sin, no conversion of purpose, no abhorrence of evil. Judas Iscariot, after betraying his Lord, exclaimed, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Matthew 27:4. These all lamented the results of sin, but did not sorrow for the sin itself.

There are four essential elements associated with the kind of repentance that produces conversion or restoration and therefore leads to salvation. First, there must be faith (Heb.11:6), which comes by hearing God's word (Rom.10:17). A person cannot be convinced that he has offended YHWH unless he believes in YHWH and that it is possible for YHWH to be offended by sinful behavior. Second, there must be remorse (godly sorrow). Third, there must be a change of mind that includes the resolve not to sin again. Fourth, there must be reformation (in which the behavior following repentance shows the change of mind is being carried out). The fourth element is referred to in scripture as *fruits meet for repentance* (Matt. 3:8; Lk.3:8).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached God's word, which produced in many who heard (1) a belief that they were guilty of sin and (2) a feeling of guilt (remorse, godly sorrow) for their sin. Peter told them (3) to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Those who felt the guilt of their sin immediately (4) obeyed and became transformed people. (Acts 2:41-47). All of this was associated with *repentance to salvation*. Because when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of YHWH, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth.

To see even more clearly the importance of repentance, we continued with the preaching of John the Baptist. Repentance was the keynote of his message and basis of his appeal to the people: *Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matt. 3:2). John proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, and called people to repentance. As a symbol of cleansing from sin, he baptized them in the waters of the Jordan. Thus by a significant object lesson he declared that those who claimed to be the chosen people of YHWH were defiled by sin, and that without purification of heart and life they could have no part in the Messiah's kingdom.

All who become the subject of Christ's kingdom, he said, would give evidence of faith and repentance. Kindness, honesty, and fidelity would be seen in their lives. They would minister to the needy, they would shield the defenseless, and give an example of virtue and compassion. So the followers of the Messiah will give evidence of the transformed power of the Holy Spirit. In the daily life, justice, mercy, and the love of YHWH will be seen. Otherwise they are like the chaff that is given to the fire. During His ministry Yeshua also preached this message (Matt. 4:17).

We continued learning from apostle and for example, during one of his preaching trips, Paul spent time in the city of Athens. He saw that the city was devoted to the worship of idols. Noticing an altar dedicated "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD," he used the opportunity to teach a lesson about the ***YHWH that made the world and all things therein*** (Acts 17:23-24). This God was not a god of ***gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device*** (Acts 17:29), but a God in whom ***we live, and move, and have our being*** (Acts 17:28). He is a God that demands that men be morally respectable and accountable: ***And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*** (Acts 17:30-31). In the ages of darkness that had preceded the advent of the Messiah, the divine ruler had passed lightly over the idolatry of the heathen, but now, through His Son, He had send men the light of truth; and He expected from all repentance unto salvation, not only from the poor and humble, but from the proud philosophers and the princes of the earth.

In 2 Pet. 3, Peter answered the allegation of certain scoffers that the Messiah would not return because ***for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*** (2 Pet. 3:4). Peter pointed out that just as the heavens and earth were created by the word of YHWH long ago, so ***the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men*** (2 Pet. 3:7). The reason for the delay in the return of the Messiah, Peter said, is not that He will not return but that YHWH is longsuffering, ***not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*** (2 Pet.3:9). Indeed, YHWH graciously provides time for repentance, but His longsuffering will eventually be exhausted. He will destroy His creation, and those who do not repent will perish.

If we respect the authority of God's word, that in itself is enough to convince us. It is helpful, however, to consider the results of not repenting. If we do not repent, we cannot have forgiveness of our sins. If we do not repent, we will face the Messiah on the Day of Judgment unprepared to defend our unrighteousness. If we do not repent, we will be judged and condemned to perish on the day YHWH destroys the material creation.

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