

REPENT AND BE CONVERTED

For many years I have emphasized God's unconditional love and grace. But I must admit that many in the grace teaching movement have overlooked and even scorned one of the most foundational subjects that accompanies God's grace, that is, the subject of repentance. Because of a lack of understanding of this subject, many have thought that repentance is a work of the law, legalism or man's human effort to do right, etc. None of these things are true. Repentance involves a change of mind, a change of heart and has nothing to do with works of the law. Without repentance Jesus Himself said that people will perish (See Luke 13:1-5). It is of the utmost importance that we know and understand this subject thoroughly.

Many today preach “only believe,” but that was not the message of Jesus or his apostles. Christ and his apostles preached “repent and believe” (See Mark 1:15; Mark 6:12). Any message that leaves out the call to repentance is misleading people and not representing God. The general edict of God to the human race is “repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus” (See Acts 20:20-21). The apostle Paul declared that all men everywhere must repent (Acts 17:29-31; 2 Peter 3:9). It is a command and not an option. Repentance must always accompany true faith and without it such faith is always an empty profession (See James 2:19-20). According to Jesus words, repentance and remission of sins is a packaged deal (See Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:38). The New Testament is absolutely clear, the first move that any sinner must make who

wants reconciliation with God is repentance (See Acts 3:19).

So, what is repentance? Repentance is an inner change of mind, a change of heart that results in an outward turning around, to face and move in a completely new direction (that direction is towards God). Repentance turns you FROM something, TO something. For the Thessalonian believers it turned them FROM idols TO serve the Living and True God (See 1 Thess. 1:9). The apostle Paul preached repentance FROM darkness TO light and FROM Satan UNTO God. In this turn the free gift of grace that results in forgiveness (righteousness) was granted to those who believed (See Acts 26:18). Paul stated that his ministry was to call people to repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds (See Acts 26:19-20).

Many in the Christian church today are so afraid of the word “works” (not recognizing that there are different kinds of works described in Scripture – 1 Thess. 1:3; Eph. 2:10; Acts 26:20) that they have denied the reality that faith and repentance both require evidence (or fruit) to prove their existence (Acts 26:20; Jas. 2:17-20).

To say that because we are believers, that we do not need to continue in repentance is as silly as saying that we do not need to continue in faith (See Col. 1:21-23), yet this is the attitude of many in the church today. That Jesus emphasized the seriousness of repentance or its lack thereof is truly an understatement (See Luke 13:1-5). That conversion cannot take place without repentance was the teaching of the early church (See Acts 3:19). That “repentance” is the first foundational

teaching of Christ cannot be denied (See Hebrews 6:1-3).

Scriptural repentance begins with God. Jesus said, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him ... (John 6:44). For this reason the supreme crisis of every human being comes at the moment of the Spirit’s drawing to repentance. When a person says, “Yes” to that drawing it will lead to saving faith. If rejected it will leave a person to continue in his own way. “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked TURN from his way and live” (Ezek. 33:11).

The early Christian Church continued the call for repentance. This early preaching linked repentance with faith (Acts 20:21), the demand to be baptized (Acts 2:38), and the promise of

the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47).
“Repentance” and “conversion” are identical twins (Acts 3:19). The Greek word for “conversion” is *epistrepho* and means to turn about, a turning from and a turning to. This corresponds to “repentance” and “faith.”
‘Divine grace is the efficient cause, human agency the responding effect’ (Vine’s Lexicon).

Have you turned from darkness to light, from the authority of Satan unto the authority of God, that you may receive the forgiveness of sins by calling on His Name? (Acts 26:18; Acts 4:12). **Repentance is not perfection, it is a new direction** – and it is towards God (Acts 20:21). Have you turned to “follow” Him? (Matt. 8:22; 16:24; Luke 9:23; John 10:27). “Follow” means to come or go after; to accept the guidance or leadership of; to be governed by (Rom. 10:9-10, 13).

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. An accepted definition of repentance is: *An inner change of mind, resulting in an outward turning back, or turning around, to face and to move in a completely new direction.* In the Old Testament it could be toward God or away from God. True or False.

Answer: Ezekiel 33:18-19 **18** If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. **19** And if a wicked man turns away from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so. **(NIV)**

2. Throughout the entire New Testament, repentance is the first response to the gospel that God demands. Nothing can come before it or take its place. True

repentance must always precede true faith. Without such repentance, faith alone is a mere empty profession. True or False.

Answer: Acts 2:37-38 **37** Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" **38** And Peter said to them, "Repent ..." **(NASV)**

James 2:19-20 **19** You believe there is one God. Good! But the demons believe that, too, and they tremble with fear. **20** You foolish person! Must you be shown that faith that does nothing is worth nothing? **(NCV)**

3. Any preacher who leaves out the call to repentance is misleading sinners and misrepresenting God. True or False.

Answer: Luke 13:3 3 I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.
(RSV)

2 Peter 3:9 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
(NIV)

4. Before a person's sins can be blotted out they must first: a. go to church. b. pay tithes. c. do good works. d. repent and be converted.

Answer: Acts 3:19 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out... **(KJV)**

5. According to Jesus words, repentance and forgiveness of sins is a packaged deal. True or False.

Answer: Luke 24:46-47 46 "This is what is written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later, **47** and in his name the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem." **(GNT)**

6. A person that returns to God will receive:
a. forgiveness. b. chastisement. c. scolding.

Answer: Isaiah 55:7 7 Let the wicked abandon their way of life and the evil their way of thinking. Let them come back to God, who is merciful, come back to our God, who is lavish with forgiveness. **(The Message)**

7. Conversion involves a change of: a. friends. b. churches. c. Lords.

Answer: Romans 10:9-10 **9** If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. **(NLT)**

8. As Christians we are to continue in repentance? True or False.

Answer: Acts 26:20 **20** But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent [present tense: and continue in repentance] and turn [present tense: and continue to turn]

to God, and do [present tense: and continue to do works or deeds that prove their repentance] works meet for repentance. **(KJV)**

Acts 8:13, 18-22. **13** Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. **18** Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, **19** saying, "Give me also this power, that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." **20** But Peter said to him, "Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! **21** You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. **22** Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that,

if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. **(RSV)**

Revelation 3:19 19 Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them]. So be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with zeal and repent [changing your mind and attitude]. [Prov 3:12.] **(AMP)**

9. Repentance turns FROM something, TO something. True or False.

Answer: Acts 26:18 8 to open their eyes so that they may turn away from darkness to the light, away from the power of Satan and to God. Then their sins can be forgiven, and they can have a place with those people who have been made holy by believing in me. **(NCV)**

10. Scriptural repentance begins with God. If rejected it will leave a person to continue in his own way. True or False.

Answer: Hebrews 3:7,8,13. 7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, 8 Harden not your hearts... 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Revelation 2:21 21 I gave her time to repent, but she has no desire to repent of her immorality [symbolic of idolatry] and refuses to do so. **(AMP)**

James 5:19-20 19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you wanders away from the truth, and someone helps that person come back, 20 remember this: Anyone who brings a sinner

back from the wrong way will save that sinner's soul from death and will cause many sins to be forgiven. **(NCV)**

11. Jesus and the apostles preached: a. come to church on Sunday. b. ask Jesus into your heart. c. that you should repeat this prayer after me. d. that men should repent and believe the gospel.

Answer: Mark 1:15 15 "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." **(RSV)**

Mark 6:12 12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent. **(KJV)**

Luke 24:46-47 46 "Thus it stands written that the Christ would suffer and would rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and repentance for

the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” **(NET)**

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