

What think Ye of the Bible?

Part 18. "What is Repentance unto Salvation?" (A)

There are two considerations when discussing biblical repentance. There is the repentance of a non believer, who realizes his lost condition and trusts Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Then, there is the repentance of one who already is a child of God, but who has committed a sinful act, and upon conviction of the Holy Spirit repents of this particular sinful act and forsakes this act/practice and asks the Lord for forgiveness of this transgression (I John 1:9)

Both are biblical as we can read accounts in God's Word that exemplify each of these kinds of repentances.

I want to focus on the first one mentioned in the previous paragraph, the repentance of an unbeliever, who first trusts Christ for his salvation.

Before making mention of the numerous Scripture references of repentance, I would like to address several unbiblical approaches that may not lead to salvation at all, but leave the sinner with a false sense of security.

The most seemingly popular and most often used phrase is "You must ACCEPT Jesus to get saved." One man was overheard saying some time ago "I just don't understand why people don't accept Jesus?" Evangelists and pastors alike continuously use this phrase of "Accepting Jesus" in their preaching and teaching. "Accepting Jesus" is not in the Bible. We never read in the Scripture where Jesus tells His listeners (or readers) "You Must ACCEPT ME." It is simply not there. Careful reading and study of the Bible will reveal that it is God Who ACCEPTS the sinner.

Ephesians 1:6 KJV

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Regardless of how many pastors or evangelists promote this concept of ACCEPTING JESUS, it is NOT BIBLICAL.

Another false evangelistic phrase that is dominant among Christians is this idea of "Decisional Salvation." "You Must make a DECISION for Jesus." This is also not found in the Bible.

Other popular notions of salvation are "Going Forward" at an evangelistic meeting when an invitation is given, or signing a "Decision Card." Of course, there are multiple combinations of all of the above.

My Dear Friends, the Bible teaches us that when a sinner gets saved he/she "receives" Christ. There is a huge theological difference between saying "I accepted Christ" and

saying "I received Christ." When a person says "I accepted" Christ, the weight of the verb accept is on the person, who finally 'got smart and saw the light' and decided to then "accept" Christ. As stated in previous articles salvation is of the LORD. The Holy Spirit is the One Who initiates the inner transformation and regenerates the sinner to give the New Birth. The concept of the NEW BIRTH is a perfect illustration that salvation is the work of God, and only of God. Just as a man, woman or child can never say "I gave myself my physical birth" (which would be a ridiculous statement) no one can, equally, say "I gave myself the New Spiritual Birth." A new born baby required an outside force to bring it into existence, and the New Spiritual Birth requires an outside power (God) to bring the New Life IN Christ into being.

This concept was in the minds of the translators of the English Bible. They all realized and acknowledged that man is passive in God's act of regeneration.

Consider the following verses.

John 1:12 KJV

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Colossians 2:6 KJV

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

Please notice the word 'receive' in the above verses. Salvation is a GIFT from God by an act of His Grace and Mercy. Man does not earn or ever merit salvation. Neither can man ever claim to have taken the first initiative of bringing salvation to himself. God opens the sinner's heart as in Acts 16:14 "Lydia...whose heart the Lord opened."

Therefore, in summary of this introduction to repentance, when a person gives a personal testimony of salvation it is proper to say "I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior on such or such a date under these circumstances."

It is sad to note that these erroneous concepts have become cultural Christian constructs, which have been rooted and grounded by constant repetition on TV, Radio, Internet. The root cause of all this is lack of deep theological teaching and the absence of systematic new believers discipleship training.

(This is for the Greek Nerds. The word for received in Greek is

ἔλαβον, from LABANOW. At certain times this can be translated as I TAKE or I ACCEPT. But, the tenor of Scripture in regards to salvation places the theological weight for the English translation on receive, not accept.)

Having negated some of the false concepts regarding salvation, let us look at what Holy

Writ has to say about this topic. Yes, may we go to the source of truth and find the answer. How does Jesus address this issue? How do the Apostles handle it? What exactly do they tell their audiences after their teaching and preaching? Even a casual examination will reveal a common theme. "You Must REPENT and TRUST Jesus Christ for salvation."

Consider the following examples from the Bible. Please focus on the word REPENTANCE in each of these verses.

Luke 5:32 KJV (Jesus said)

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Luke 13:5 KJV

I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Note, without repentance you will perish - in hell)

Acts 3:19 KJV

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,...

(Conversion requires repentance)

2 Peter 3:9 KJV

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (The Lord wants men to REPENT)

2 Corinthians 7:10 KJV

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

(Notice godly sorrow is tied to repentance).

Mark 6:12 KJV

And they went out, and preached that men should repent. (Jesus's disciples preached that men should repent)

There are many more verses with similar exhortation toward repentance. May I also state that there are also abundant verses exhorting the reader to have faith (believe) in Christ (who He is and what He has done to provide redemption for sinners). There will be a following article (s) describing faith in Christ.

It should be mentioned that faith (trust in Christ) and repentance are two sides of the same coin. There is no faith without genuine repentance, and there is no repentance without genuine faith. They go together.

Now let's focus in on repentance. Repentance is mentioned 25 times in the New Testament, while Repent is mentioned 22 times. Perhaps God is trying to teach us something regarding these words.

The English rendering 'repentance' is a translation of the Greek word μετάνοια.

The transliteration in English is METANOIA consisting of a compound word. META is a preposition which in this case means "after" or "beyond." NOIA has its root in NOUS, or MIND. Together this word has a meaning 'after mind,' or 'beyond mind,' OR in simple terms a CHANGE OF MIND. Repentance, therefore, is a radical change of mind, which ultimately will result in an altered understanding of what is real and what is truth. This will lead to a radically changed world view, thought life, words and deeds.

This article has reached its maximum size as I am typing it on my Android phone. When it reaches three pages in length, it begins to behave erratically.

There is much more I intend to say about the CHANGE OF MIND. That will come in the next article following this one.

Lord, please find fertile ground for these Bible articles so that sinners will be saved and YOU will get the GLORY.

With Warm Regards,

Horst Adler

"For I am not ashamed of the
Gospel of Christ." (Ro. 1:16)