

What think Ye of the Bible?

Part 19. "What is Repentance unto Salvation?" (B)

In the previous article we briefly examined the word repentance, and we looked at its origin in the original Greek language. The analysis of the compound word showed us that the meaning of repentance is 'Change of Mind.' (Please note that 'Change of Mind' is not in isolation. The ultimate goal of repentance is that this change of mind will result in a changed attitude, thought life and behavior).

Occasionally, repentance is used in a way that leads to a limited understanding of the concept. It might be said by someone who is evangelizing a group or an individual that "you must repent of your sins." While there certainly is a level of truth in that exhortation, we must ask the following question. Can anyone repent to such an extent that a person becomes sinless? Of course not. That is not possible while we are still in this unredeemed body. Even a person who has been saved for many years is still subject to the tendencies of the old unregenerate nature, and will on occasions sin in thought, word and deed. The Apostle John settles that question once and for all.

1 John 1:8 KJV

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

However, one should expect that an already born again believer would endeavor to keep a short account of sin by using the exhortation given in I John 1:9, and abstain from the more egregious forms of sin such as adultery, fornication, drunkenness, blasphemy, high-mindedness and such.

It would be certainly appropriate to tell an evangelistic prospect, of whom you know that he lives in a compromised situation, that he must repent of his sinful lifestyle.

But, the meaning of the word repentance - change of mind - actually has a deeper theological import.

So, let's dive into that.

What exactly must change in a person's mind to meet the requirement that Jesus and the Apostles implied when they said "repent?"

On a broad scale, their entire "world view" has to change. While that would most likely seem as huge as an elephant in a room to a person with whom you are sharing the Gospel, we need to whittle it down to a few smaller bites that the prospect could "chew" and understand.

Let's begin with their view about God. Whether the person is an atheist, agnostic, or is aware that a God exists somewhere, but is living his life as if there is no God, he needs to

repent and change his mind about God. Remember, this is a lost person, who does not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and as such has only a superficial and insufficient knowledge about God. He needs to realize and acknowledge this insufficiency of his understanding of who God is and that God desires to be actively involved in people's lives.

His mind must change (repent) and fully embrace the biblical truth that God is holy, righteous, just and perfect in His character, and as such, God hates sin and anything that is defiled and impure. This truth cannot simply become a perfunctory, intellectual assent to this eternal truth about God in his mind, but it should affect his entire inner faculties in such a way as to bring him to a sense of newly found awe and astonishment about God, whom he has ignored his entire life.

He must also change his mind about God in so far that he now realizes that this Holy and Pure and Righteous God is also the Lawgiver in His universe which He created. God is not the proverbial "grandfather with white hair in heaven" who loves everybody and will never judge anyone. God issued the Ten Commandment, and will hold everybody accountable to the extent to which they have kept His Commandments. Whereas, previously, this evangelistic prospect most likely lived his life, as most unsaved people do, without any serious considerations to the law of God. There must be a very serious repentance - change of mind - after realizing that he has broken every one of those ten commandments over and over again. He may not have actually murdered anyone, but Jesus told us that anger against a brother without cause is equivalent to murder. Nor, may he have actually committed adultery, but Jesus told us that looking at a woman with lust is the equivalence of adultery (Matthew 5:21,22; 27,28). In short, this prospect must come to a newly found realization of his sinfulness when viewed in light of God's commandments. This realization should create repentance - change of mind - resulting in a newly found reverence and fear of the Lord.

The person must also change his mind about himself, who he is, and how he has lived his life. He must come to an understanding that he will be judged by God according to God's standard of righteousness. People, in general, have an overinflated concept of their own righteousness, because they tend to compare themselves to other friends, neighbors or even family members. They tend to see flaws in people around them, do some silent, inner comparison, and come to the conclusion "Well, I don't do those things, I don't behave like that, therefore I am really a slightly better person than most others around me." Men tend to have a skewed perspective of themselves which results in a faulty self assessment. He must repent of this faulty thinking and fully take to heart that he is really falling short of the true standard, namely God's standard of righteousness. Romans 3:23 is very succinct and clear about this.

Romans 3:23 KJV

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Please notice that it says "ALL" have sinned. That includes everybody. This is a very poignant propositional statement from God, the Holy Spirit, to every person. It requires honest, genuine repentance - change of mind - to understand and believe what God said is true, and my previous thinking regarding my self assessment is and was WRONG.

There are those who have a very difficult time believing and embracing this Biblical truth. In a previous article I mentioned that I worked with a lady, who was my administrative assistant for eight years. She was a graduate of a New England Finishing School. I had the highest respect for her. She was a perfect professional in her field. Not only that, but from all external appearances she had an impeccable sense of ethics in behavior, speech and attitude. Her moral life was blameless.

We could all say she was a very good person.

There are many people like her. They live a life of moral and ethical impeccability. They have compassion for the needy, help others who have burdens, and may even attend a church. By all standards of earthly comparison they are a "Cut Above" in their works of human relationship. As a matter of fact, there are churches of the liberal theological persuasion that elevate "human goodness" and reject the necessity of the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross. People who have lived in this environment find it very difficult to accept the notion that they need to repent of anything. That sense of self righteousness has been so deeply ingrained, that it may take a life's crisis event to alter their thinking and bring them to an actual point of broken hearted repentance.

In summary of this segment, there must be repentance regarding one's concept regarding God, regarding God's laws, and regarding one's own sense of self righteousness. Please remember, the Bible tells us another poignant proposition.

Isaiah 64:6 KJV

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;"

The three points of repentance mentioned above are only the beginning of full repentance. After salvation a new believer will read and study the Bible, will pray and attend a Bible believing church and will grow in his Christian life into full spiritual maturity.

Repentance is biblical. Repentance is essential for genuine salvation. Genuine repentance will lead to changed attitudes, behaviors and deeds.

As stated before, repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. There is not one without the other. Thus, in the next article we will consider FAITH In CHRIST. The Apostle Paul joins both of these concepts in one succinct sentence.

Acts 20:21 KJV

"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith

toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Stay tuned for the next several articles on BELIEF (FAITH) in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 6:47 KJV

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

"Dear Heavenly Father, please find fertile soil in hearts, convict and convert. I pray in Jesus' matchless Name. Amen!"

With Warm Regards,

Horst Adler

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