

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Was the Preaching of Repentance Only for Jews Under the Old Covenant?

Was the Preaching of Repentance Only for Jews Under the Old Covenant? - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/11/9 15:55

Some Christians hold to the view that repentance is to be preached today alongside faith in Christ when presenting the Gospel to the lost.

Others argue that repentance was more of an Old Testament theme, and that therefore the preaching of it is not useful or needful today. It is argued that repentance was preached only to the Jews and not to the Gentiles. They argue that repentance is a human work or effort, and that to preach repentance when preaching the Gospel is to add to the Gospel or to faith in Christ; they say it is preaching a works-based righteousness.

So who's right? In this post I wish to reason from the Scriptures that that latter view concerning repentance is clearly unbiblical to say the least (will share pertinent Scriptures below).

It's been said that repentance and faith in Christ are like two sides of the same coin, you cannot have one without the other. There can be no salvation without repentance. So what is Biblical repentance? I thought this Martyn Lloyd Jones quote nails it:

“Repentance means that you realize that you are a guilty, vile sinner in the presence of God, that you deserve the wrath and punishment of God, that you are hell-bound. It means that you begin to realize that this thing called sin is in you, that you long to get rid of it, and that you turn your back on it in every shape and form. You renounce the world whatever the cost, the world in its mind and outlook as well as its practice, and you deny yourself, and take up the cross and go after Christ. Your nearest and dearest, and the whole world, may call you a fool, or say you have religious mania. You may have to suffer financially, but it makes no difference. That is repentance.”

May God raise up more unashamed repentance preachers in these last days.

So here are some New Testament Scriptures which clearly show that repentance was to be preached in the New Testament era to the Gentiles just as much as to the Jews:

"Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."-Luke 24:6-47

Peter told Simon the sorcerer, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you."-Acts 8:22

"When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."-Acts 11:18

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."-Acts 17:30-31

"how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."-Acts 20:20-21

"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance."-Acts 26:19-20

"Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."-2 Cor. 7:9-10

"in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth" 2 Tim. 2:25

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9

"But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts." -Rev. 9:20-21

"And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory." -Rev. 16:9

Re: Was the Preaching of Repentance Only for Jews Under the Old Covenant? - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2015/11/21 0

Alas, I do not argue here as I am a member of this choir.

Repentance is the floor of a Godly man's personal house of worship and joy, you will rarely meet a Christian living in the joyful confidence of Christ without a testimony of bone scraping repentance.

But I would direct your view to one of the passages Oracio quoted- 2 Cor. 7:10 which has a sometimes un-noticed sub-line. "For Godly sorrow leads a man to repentance AND THERE ARE NO REGRETS!..."

In the majestic order of God's plan for man, removing that title "sinful man," true repentance ushers him through a spiritual door where on the other side he is genuinely forgiven. And thus able to live not without memories of his sin, but free from the chains of regret!

The apostle Paul who was a murderer of Christians, by his own admission the worst of all sinners, became an unabashed preacher of righteousness while living out complete peace in his heart and soul. He knew what he had done, but lived without regret. It was his own repentance that put him in that holy place, and gave us the supreme example to follow.

Amazing God, so eager to pour upon us the fruit of His Son's sacrifice and life abundant. No wonder He would that all men come to repentance!

Re: Was the Preaching of Repentance Only for Jews Under the Old Covenant? - posted by JFW (), on: 2015/11/21 10:26

Amen brothers!! Amen!

This is the part of the gospel the world doesn't like, can't manage, can't twist and the part that is quite purposefully confrontational, effacing and humiliating.

Repentance is the axe taken to the root,... While it is a privilege given by God, it is also an action to be taken by the voluntary force of will in response to one's condition being revealed in the light of Christ. It is at the same time a deep shame, a loathing of the very fabric of oneself and also deeper still a desire to be delivered from this condition and to be conformed, at any cost to ourselves, into the image of the one in whose presence these things have been revealed.

Oracio, I too have heard people say and teach as you have said- I believe there is a crucial misunderstanding of Hebrews 6:1, where some have erred and gone astray. It's a dangerous thing to believe one need not repent as the only freedom from this error is found in the very repentance they reject.

But our God is gentle and merciful and as such so will those be whom walk with Him-

2 Timothy 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Re: , on: 2015/11/21 11:39

If one is to turn away from Satan then the only other alternative is to turn towards Jesus Christ.

"To open their eyes, AND TO TURN THEM from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Act 26:18)

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"

Repentance is best defined as "a change of mind that leads to a change of action, a turning away from Satan and turning one's whole being (heart, mind, soul and strength) towards Jesus Christ" (Acts 26:20; Matt. 3:8)

Repentance is misunderstood by some as a human "work" or achievement. Some have misdefined repentance by denying that it is in any way a condition of regeneration and this has led to the "Lordship salvation" controversy.

Repentance should not be viewed as just a "change of mind" or some psychological step that leads to behavior modification.

In order to receive Christ and the way of Christ, one must reject the world's ways. Repentance/faith is an essential condition of Christian regeneration and conversion.

Is it possible that some who call themselves "Christians" have mentally assented to Christ (signed on, got their ticket punched), but have never repented?

Re: Was the Preaching of Repentance Only for Jews Under the Old Covenant? - posted by proudpapa, on: 2015/11/21 11:39

I recall Roy Hession speaking about a woman that he was preaching to : (If I recall correctly) it seemed that she had been a preacher's wife and that she had a life time of kleptomania. When God finally granted her conviction for her kleptomania, The fear of having as a preacher's wife to repent, confess and make restitution where needed, terrified her into a state of inability to repent, the humiliation was too great of a snare.

Now many preachers would have given her the hard road or else speech.

Roy Hession wisely continued preaching the Love of God to her day after day until the Love of God filled her heart and replaced her self consciousness. and then because she was Loved, not so that she might become worthy of love that woman was able to truly repent and make restitution where needed.

edit : rephrase some portion for clarity of understanding

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/11/21 17:49

Amen brothers!

proud papa, I agree there is need for wisdom and the leading of the Spirit in each situation when dealing with lost souls. I believe that in general, when sharing the gospel with an unsaved person one to one, if we notice that there is serious conviction of sin we can stress and dwell on the love of God in Christ. One of the tools of Satan is to convince sinners that their sins are too grave for God to forgive them, that their case is beyond hope. Especially in this case we must stress and point people to the blood of Jesus as their sure hope of forgiveness.

But if we do not see any signs of conviction of sin and merely stress the love of God I'd say we run the danger of casting pearls before swine and facilitating the trampling of our Lord's blood underfoot which our Lord commanded us not to do.

Re: - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2015/11/21 19:33

Paris Reidhead puts repentance as step 3 of a normal saving progression. Any part of the 4 parts of the conversion continuum taken out of order produces a skewed Christian testimony that is in danger of being damaged by the harsh real world.

The worst of course is getting people to "accept Christ" with no grounding in what the sin they commit means to God.

Even getting people to "repent" when their sin is really just the normal course of everyday life will probably not change much. For these people, repenting is little more than checking a box on the religious acceptance form.

Step one in the conversion process is the awakening. It is that realization That God is real, holy, and knows me- and things are not all right!

Step two is conviction, now knowing that I am full of sin that is repugnant to a holy God to Whom I must give account.

Step three is repentance, responding to this new reality in my consciousness, recognizing that I cannot bear continuing like this, I must change direction! An awakened, convicted repenter will make the changes based on all the promises of God- that He will indeed judge and destroy the unrepentant, and is eager to forgive and give the life of His Son to those who do turn from wicked ways.

Step four is the receiving of Christ as Lord (the One I will obey) and Savior (the One who died in my place according to the salvation covenant.)

All the steps are necessary, even if through the imperfections of life they do not occur in the proper order. I accepted Christ almost a decade before I repented, with more awakening and convicting coming in the years after that. I am fortunate that He has always been patient and let me learn things- even if they are out of order!

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/11/21 20:03

That's good Tom. By God's grace I can attest to having gone through those four steps in that specific order upon coming to Christ. For me, steps 1-3 seemed to come like a flood all at once, in a matter of seconds. I'm not too sure if step four also occurred on that same day or a day or two afterward. I say that because at first I did not understand clearly the grace of God in Christ. I only understood the need for repentance and sought to forsake all sin. I thought that God required moral perfection as a condition of salvation and thought I could be morally perfect with God's help. But I soon realized I could not be perfect as I realized that sin was not only outward but also inward, in my thought-life. It was then that I got somewhat discouraged because I could not be completely freed from sinful thoughts. And it was then that I began to realize more fully that salvation is by God's grace through faith in the blood of Christ and not of works. So whether or not I was truly saved before that fuller realization of God's amazing grace I do not know for sure.

Re: - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2015/11/23 0:19

"Saved" is a word we regularly use of course, but really no one is saved until they have completed their course and are receiving the approval of God at the judgement!

Perhaps a better term might be that we are "being saved" or some such more descriptive of our tumultuous ups and downs, doubts and reassurances, flesh trips and contrite renewals. As Paul says, "I am confident that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

I have mentioned before and it seems apropos to mention it here- repentance is best as a character quality, always there when needed. It is the ability to see a problem when it is small, fresh, and crying out for me to turn back to righteousness, back to the place in God I love best.

"Prone to wander, Lord I feel it-
Prone to leave the God I love!
Here's my heart O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above!"*

Always loved that the writer of that hymn knew himself and God as I do, I always love singing that verse when it comes along!

(*Come thou Fount, Robert Robinson)

Re: , on: 2015/11/23 6:43

Great song and great point, Savannah.

The Master said, "but he that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved."

Re: - posted by JFW (), on: 2015/11/23 11:08

Brother Tom,
Amen!

I couldn't agree more with your last post:) it's something I've noticed over the years of studying out the word and thought it a strange thing that people used the term "saved" in the past tense to describe an ongoing event. Often there was a charge that salvation was being confused with sanctification tho the two do not (for me) seem separate.

In any case I appreciate your thoughts here.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/11/23 12:07

I see salvation as a three-phase process, past, present and future. We were saved (past), we are being saved (present), and we will be saved (future).

1. In the past we were saved (born again, forgiven and justified) as soon as we called upon the name of the Lord to save us. We can have the assurance of our salvation through the blood of Jesus and our repentance and faith in Him. We now have the free gift of eternal life as a present possession which we received upon our true conversion to Christ (see 1 John 5:13). "And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham" - Luke 19:9; "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?" - Romans 8:14; "even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" - Ephesians 2:5; "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" - Ephesians 2:8; "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" - 2 Timothy 1:9; "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" - Titus 3:5.

2. In the present time we are also being saved (sanctified). We are being saved from the present corruption that is in this world and in these bodies of flesh which we must mortify daily by the power of the Word and the Spirit. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." - 1 Corinthians 1:8

3. In the future we will be saved when this mortality puts on immortality. When our bodies are redeemed and resurrected to glory we will experience salvation in the ultimate sense. "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." - Romans 5:9; "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" - Romans 13:11; "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" - 1 Corinthians 3:15; "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." - 1 Corinthians 5:5.

So we see these three aspects of salvation clearly taught in the Scriptures.

Re: - posted by JFW (), on: 2015/11/23 17:18

Brother Oracio,
Yes! That's exactly the point I was attempting to articulate:)

While there is certainly an aspect that has been accomplished there is still more to come, which is why it has puzzled me that so often the yet to be revealed aspects go largely unmentioned in most verbiage I've read regarding salvation. It's almost as if it's been reduced to be exclusively a past tense contextual event and lessened from what the totality of salvation ultimately is.

Having said this, I certainly agree with your presentation~

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/11/23 17:56

Amen JFW, I agree with your assessment of how salvation has been watered down a lot in our times.

Re: - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2015/11/24 23:23

Oracio, you are a man of great wisdom and great clarity!

I agree with the the idea that we are "saved" in this present life, in that we are in pursuit of God as His children, following after Him, learning, working, living in obedience, and above the pangs of guilt and despair that those who do not know Him must endure as they encounter the contrary winds of life.

Indeed we encounter all these troubles also, but with- can I say, "saving hope" we are never in that same darkness. We are saved from that in the here and now!

Good word, brother!

Re: - posted by ManOfG0d (), on: 2015/11/28 15:21

Greetings everyone, Repentance is the message that the prophets preached in the the old testament. Repentance is the message that Jesus Christ and the Apostles preached, and the message that must be preached to all men today.

Acts 17:30 KJV

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: