

Repentance

(by Bob Pulliam)

Repentance is a subject with which many people need help. Not only from the standpoint of application; but also understanding. There are many funny ideas running around in the religious world about repentance. We will not go through and try to list them; but we do want to consider the truth of God's word on the subject.

The word "repent", as you find it in your Bible. means, "to perceive afterwards... hence signifies to change one's mind or purpose..." (Vines, pg 952). It does *not* mean, as so many believe, "to be sorry for your sins". Sorrow for sin *leads* to repentance (II Cor 7:9 & 10). Repentance is the change of mind that results from your sorrow for sin. It is always reflected by a change in one's life.

A good illustration of repentance can be found in Mt 21:28 - 31, where two sons are commanded to go work in their father's field. The first son said he would not go. But afterward we find him changing his mind and going. He changed his mind, and that change was reflected by his actions. This is necessary in becoming a Christian. One cannot keep a lifestyle that is worldly and be godly at the same time. One must change his mind about the kind of life he wants to live, and then live his life in conformance with the change his mind has made. The life, then, reflects the decision made in the mind. We find such to be the case in passages like Ephesians 4:22 - 24. We are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. We are to put off an old man, and put on a new man. This all refers to a change of life that results from a change of mind (repentance).

God has made the necessity of repentance very clear in His word (Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; II Cor 7:9 & 10). Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Peter linked repentance with the forgiveness of sins. And why not? Jesus said, "repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name" (Lk 24:47) The result of repentance must be seen in the life of the person (see Rom 6:1 - 14). John told the Pharisees and Sadducees to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. The fruit exhibits the identity of the tree on which it grows. The actions of the individual will exhibit his identity as either a child of God, or of Satan. The word "sanctify", or "sanctified", occurs many times in the scriptures. It means "to be set apart for a purpose".

When a person is sanctified, he is set apart from the world and condemnation, and set apart to godliness and all it's blessings. You cannot be sanctified and never repent. Sanctification and repentance are inseparable.

"Fully" Repenting...

I have run into several who have questioned their past repentance when they eventually sinned again. For example; they have been accustomed to cursing and swearing often, but then repent of such. Before long they let a word slip. Is it possible that they did not fully repent? This is a case of conditioned response over time. While such words may slip before the response can be reconditioned, such does not mean that one has not repented. If the individual keeps trying to overcome, he will. The change of mind will change the life. Let me point out here that this is not a question of "fully" or "half-way" repenting. Either you repent, or you don't! How do you partially change your mind. You have not changed your mind until you've changed it. Some would leave the impression that you might repent

(change your mind), but still practice sin. Such is foreign to the scriptures. The life must reflect the change of mind!

"Repenting of Past Sins"...

I know what most mean when they speak of "repenting of past sins". But some don't mean what the Bible requires. Some are "sorry" for past sins, and for them this constitutes repentance. Such is not repentance, however! Actually, "repenting of past sins" is an unfortunate phrase.

When one repents, one repents of sin. ALL sin! This phrase reminds me of the religious worlds observance of Lent. Something sinful is to be given up by each individual during this period. What some actually do is take up a practice prior to Lent just so they can give it up. It wasn't something they actually enjoyed, but it keeps them from giving up something they do enjoy. If we just repent of past sins, then we have left before us a whole array of sins we may still wish to engage in! I've never killed anyone, so I haven't changed my mind about murder..... yet?! Such is absurd, and totally perverts the idea of repentance. When I repent, I change my mind about transgressing the law of God. I change my mind about serving Satan. I change my life in accordance with the change in mind I have made. I do not pick out specific sins each year in the hope that I will live long enough to put all sin away.

Conclusion...

"Repentance" is a change of mind that is reflected by a changed life. The individual, upon learning the truth of God, realizes the foolishness of sin and determines to avoid it in every way possible. Everything branded as sin by God's word, or condemned by righteous principles is off limits to the child of God. Does your life reflect a change of mind by righteous living?