

## Doctrine of Conversion and Repentance

1. The Bible has much to say about the subject of conversion.
  - *Psalms 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*
  - *Psalms 51:13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*
  - *Matthew 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*
  - *Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;*
  - *Acts 15:3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.*
  - *James 5:20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*
  
2. A soul is said to be converted when there is true *evangelical repentance*. *Evangelical repentance* is not moral reformation, nor is it remorse by itself.
  - Esau changed his mind about giving away his birthright and repented with tears but he was not converted. (Genesis 27; Hebrews 12:17)
  - Judas also repented and returned the coins of betrayal, but he was not converted. (Matthew 27:3, 5 cf. Acts 1)
  
3. *Evangelical repentance* is a sincere regret that the Law of God has been violated. It includes a horrible sight of self for what one is: a violator of the holiness of the Lord.
  - *Isaiah. Isaiah 6:5 Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*
  - *Peter. Luke 5:8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*
  
4. In recent years, true gospel repentance has been minimized as if there is something too humbling about being truthful or too demanding.

5. Repentance has been reduced in meaning to simply changing one's mind about *sin* without any emotional conviction about *sins*. However, the Bible remains firm on this point.
  - *Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
  - *Matthew 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:*
  - *Matthew 9:13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*
  - *Luke 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
  - *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*
  - *Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;*
6. Evangelical repentance must be extensive. *“Repentance to be sure must be entire. Many will say, Sir, I will renounce this sin and the other, but there are certain darling lusts which I must keep. O sirs, in God's name let me entreat you: it is not the giving up of any one sin, nor fifty sins, which is true repentance; it is the solemn renunciation of every sin. If thou dost harbor one of these accursed vipers in thy heart, thy repentance is but a sham; if thou dost indulge in but one lust and dost give up every other, that one lust, like one leak in a ship, will sink thy soul. Think it not sufficient to give up thy outward vices, fancy it not enough to cut off the more corrupt sins of thy life: it is all or none which God demands. ‘Repent,’ says He, and when He bids you repent, He means repent of all thy sins, otherwise He can never accept thy repentance as being real.”* (C.H. Spurgeon)
7. Evangelical repentance must be practical and answer the honest question, “How does one Repent”?
8. Ultimately, the ability to repent is a divine gift of grace. Such a gift is needed for the heart grows gospel hardened. However, there are some things that the soul in search of salvation can do.
  - A soul can consider the law of the Lord, examine itself in light of the Ten Commandments, and render an honest verdict.
  - A soul can consider whether or not it is ready to forsake sin. Consideration is not ability but, as a prisoner can long for freedom, so a sinner can long for divine deliverance from sin. But this point must be understood.

The Bible teaches that there must be a forsaking of sin before God will pardon offenders. *Psalm 130:4 There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.*

God's mercy is never expressed at the expense of His holiness. Thomas Goodwin wrote, "*Resolve either to leave every known sin and to submit to every known duty, or else never look to find mercy and favor with God.*"

Deuteronomy 29:19-20 warns careless converts: "*And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: 20 The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.*"

9. Evangelical preaching necessitates a word of warning. There is such a thing as false repentance. A.W. Pink notes several features of a non-saving repentance.
  - Trembling beneath the preaching of God's Word is not repentance. Felix "trembled" when Paul preached, but was not converted. *Acts 24:25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*
  - Being almost persuaded is not repentance reflected in the case of Agrippa. *Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* A person may go so far as to give full assent to the message of God's servants, admire the Gospel, and even "*receive the word with joy,*" and afterwards prove to have but a stony heart. (Matthew 13:20, 21) Such a person might even acknowledge they have sinned as Pharaoh said, "*I have sinned against the Lord.*" (Exodus 10:16)
  - Humbling ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God is not repentance.
  - Confessing sins is not repentance.
  - A person may even do works meet for repentance and yet remain impenitent.
10. To encourage the heart and to guide the seeking soul in evangelical repentance some true signs of repentance are noted.
  - True repentance consists of a deep consciousness of what one is in the sight of God. Isaiah caught such a sight of himself and cried out. *Isaiah 6:5 Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*
  - True repentance is characterized by a bitter sorrow for sin, a holy horror and hatred for sin, a turning away from or forsaking of sin.

- Evangelical repentance is a heart-apprehension of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. *Luke 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner* (Study Psalm 51:1, 2, 4, 9).
- Evangelical repentance is a longing to please God.
- Evangelical repentance is the sinner seeking to make peace with God by honest confession and absolute surrender. *Luke 14:32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

#### 11. Evangelical repentance involves the following dimensions.

- Evangelical repentance recognizes God's claim upon our lives as Creator, Governor, Provider and Protector.
- Evangelical repentance approves the claims of God upon the heart. It admits that the law of God is holy, just, and good and should be obeyed. *Romans 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*
- Evangelical repentance involves a running to Christ for divine pardon.
- Evangelical repentance involves:

- ❖ a change of mind (Gk. *metanoeo*).

*Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

- ❖ a change of heart. (Gk. *metamelomai*).

*Matthew 21:29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.*

*Matthew 21:32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.*

*Hebrews 7:21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord swear and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)*

- ❖ A change of course of life. (Gk. *metanio*)

*Matthew 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:*

*Matthew 9:13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

*Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*