

Perseverance in Repentance

Repentance is necessary for salvation:

There is a belief within the Christian church that repentance from sins is not necessary for salvation. This false belief is called “antinomianism” that holds that under grace, only faith alone is necessary to salvation.

The denial of the need for repentance of that sin in order to go to heaven flies in the face of the biblical witness. John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter and Paul all taught that repentance is mandatory, not optional. But then is repentance a “work” we must perform in order to earn our salvation? Not at all! Repentance and faith are really two sides of the same coin. Repentance is turning from sin. Faith is turning to, trusting in, and relying on Christ. Repentance is not a “work” anymore than faith is: we simply renounce our sin and rely on Christ.

Luk 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

2Pe 3:9 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.

In fact, Jesus *began* his ministry preaching *repentance leading to salvation*: “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. *Repent and believe the good news!*” (Mark 1:14-16). After His ascension, Jesus prophesied that, going forward, repentance would be a requirement for the forgiveness of sins: “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47). Jesus came preaching repentance from sin, not acceptance of sin.

Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

Mar 1:15 And saying, **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.**

Luk 5:32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

He was still calling for repentance after his ascension into heaven (Revelation 2, 3). According to the Bible, repentance is for the forgiveness of sins and for salvation:

Act 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.

Act 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;

Act 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

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

Act 26:20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Because repentance is such an essential element in the salvation process, it is important to understand what genuine repentance really is and how it comes about.

Confess

The first step on the road to repentance is to agree with God that what you have done is wrong, i.e., that it is “sin” (1 John 1:9). This may be experienced as Godly sorrow and/or a change of heart regarding your sin (2 Corinthians 7:10, 1 Kings 8:46-47). As a result, you will feel compelled to confess in your mind and with your mouth that you have sinned (2 Samuel 12:12-13).

Turn

The second step on the road to repentance is to actually turn from your sin (2 Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 3:8, Acts 26:20). That means that you make a quality decision to stop doing the sinful thing you have been doing and then follow through on your decision and stop doing it. This is where the genuineness of your commitment to your decision is tested and proven; it’s the really hard part. We are all familiar with the phrase “Actions speak louder than words”, and Jesus said “By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20). Without turning, your confession is, at best, questionable and to no avail.

Persevere

The third and most rewarding step on the road to repentance is perseverance. It is common experience to be tempted to return to our old, sinful ways after we have turned from them. Unfortunately, it is also common experience to give in to such temptations by choosing to do so (James 1:13-14). But God will give us the strength to resist temptation when we submit ourselves to Him and resist the Devil (James 4:7). To really conquer sin means not only to confess and turn from it initially, but also to persevere in our repentance to the end.(James 1:2-4, Hebrews 12:1,2)

Repentance Is a Process

When we become born-again, all of our past sins are instantly forgiven. We refer to that wholesale forgiveness event as “justification.” But, sadly, we remain vulnerable to various temptations that can lead us to sin again (1 John 1:10). Over time, the Holy Spirit, with our cooperation, cleanses us from more and more of our remaining sins in a process called “sanctification”, whereby we are convicted of a residual sin, confess it (1 John 1:9), turn away from it and, eventually, conquer it. This is why we born-again Christians often detect sin in both ourselves and in our fellow believers, even though we are already “saved”; these are simply sins that we have not yet allowed the Holy Spirit to cleanse us of. The presence of such sins in our lives does not mean, necessarily, that we are not really saved; it may just mean that we are still a “work in progress.” So, let’s be patient and forgiving toward one another as we travel the road to repentance. It’s a busy and crowded road indeed!

Summary

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.” (Acts 3:19-20)