

WITHOUT REPENTANCE...

Over the last several years, the Lord has revealed something dreadfully wrong with our efforts to effectively minister the Great Commission. Directly before the Lord Jesus would ascend into heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, He spoke this command...

Matthew 28:18-20

We must take note that Jesus did not declare, “Go out and lead them to accept the Lord” or “Go out and make converts through the sinner’s prayer”, nor did He say, “Evangelize the entire world”.

We would all agree, preaching salvation by grace through faith in Christ and what He accomplished in His cross and resurrection, is essential in making disciples, and part of the Great commission (**Mark 16:15-20**), but let us not continue the mistake of separating disciple-making from evangelism.

An honest study from the Gospels, concerning How Jesus made His first disciples, reveals our Lord often revealed their sin and weakness—spoke of His coming cross and resurrection and the need for forgiveness of sins—modeled, taught and commanded them how to live and minister—and commanded them to reveal these things to others. We also understand that after all that, they all abandoned Him and were mire in unbelief, even as He stood risen among them in the upper room.

All the above, including repeated preaching of the Christ crucified and risen, is how we are to make disciples. In this understanding, let us consider that the Lord made no reference to the moment of salvation being a confession and official prayer. And all though I have led my share of people is a verbal prayer of akin to **Romans 10:9-10** and not against it as a tool, that same prayer, without proper repentance can do great harm. Therefore, Jesus warned us about faith based on confession alone (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

What I just said may offend more than a few but let us look at **Romans 10: 9-10** *“That is you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart, one believes unto*

righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”.

In the first place, this passage was not written to be used for a call to confession-based salvation, but to declare that salvation is the potential of both Jew and Gentile, through faith, not works of the Law. In Chapter 10 of Romans Paul is finishing an argument to humble the Jewish contingent in the church, that where attempting to make the Gentiles do various portions of the Law for salvation, in addition to faith in Christ. The Jews were also declaring, to a certain degree that Gentiles, were limited in the faith, like they were in the Old testament, because they were not Jewish.

Secondly, we must understand that if one confesses with their mouth, that Jesus is their Lord, they must have a life that proves He their confession, the master of their lives, or they would fall into those Jesus describes in **Matthew 7:21-23**.

One of the life elements which reveals Christ as Lord of the life, falls into the purview of Jesus commanding us in disciple-making to **“teach all things whatsoever I have commanded you”**. In fact, the first recorded that Jesus teaching or command of Christ in the Gospels is... To REPENT.

Matthew 4:17

The Lord’s words in Matthew occur directly after Jesus returns in the power of the Spirit, from being tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Mark’s Gospel makes His teaching even clearer.

Mark 1:14-15

In these passages the Lord Jesus Christ gives us two fundamental elements necessary for salvation, repentance, and faith, but in His order of the words, we see that repentance is a necessary first, then faith will have God’s desired effect.

We see this applied throughout the New Testament. Consider **II Corinthians 7:10**, as Paul is writing to more than a few Christians, in the city of Corinth, who have backslidden or never truly repented.

2 Corinthians 7:10

Without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins or salvation. This is what is fundamentally and deadly wrong with our efforts to make disciples, over the last several decades, in America. So, what is repentance any way.

REPENTANCE

In the Old Testament repentance, from man's perspective, is most strongly associated with the Hebrews word for "**turn**" which is "**šûb**", which means to turn away from. The most familiar passage to many would be **II Chronicle 7:14**.

2 Chronicles 7:14

You will notice that God will not bless until there is a humbling in godly sorrow and a forsaking of the ways of our life that are contrary to His character as expressed in His word. This truth carries over into the New Testament with the word "**repentance**".

"**repentance**" comes from the Greek word "**metanoēō**" which means to change one's mind for the better, heartily amending one's way, with abhorrence of one's past sins.

Here we see that godly sorrow, from Holy Spirit conviction, brings about a change of mind concerning our life and practice. We see our behavior as sinful contrary to God and deserving of judgment; we amend our lives by abhorring and forsaking our sin. This is more than mere confession as we will soon see.

In this understanding we see where our presentation of the Gospel is off. Even in using the "Romans Road" and declaring to them all have sinned and fall sure of the glory of God (**Romans 3:23**) or the "wage of sin is death...", we shift to quickly to "...but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ the Lord; leaving any direction on repentance, in favor of getting them "saved".

There is a lot of distance between the comma and the "but" of that passage. Where is the godly sorrow, where is the forsaking of sin and practice which are the hallmark and necessity of repentance?

A person who cannot consider their ways, with grief and fear of God, will never properly repent; hence they cannot receive the

blessing and benefit of the cross. Therefore, we must pray for and call them out of their sin.

The first step in evangelism is not proclaiming God loves you and has a marvelous plan for your life, but to bring the subject squarely into knowledge of their impending judgment for sin, to the degree that the Holy Spirit can produce godly sorrow, which “WORKS” repentance.

This is not “works salvation”, for only Christ’s finished work can remove the stain of sin and bring the benefit of resurrection life, but this is the truth that salvation cannot be received by faith, until the preparatory work of repentance has made a straight path for the Lord Jesus to travel to the throne that is our heart. Let us consider the ministry of John the Baptism and what it reveals about the necessity of repentance concerning salvation.

MAKE A WAY FOR THE LORD TO TRAVEL

Isaiah 40:3-5

John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, had a ministry of demolition and preparation. When we read “***Make straight in the desert a highway for our God***”, we must consider the ancient context of Isaiah. This phrase is in refence to what is known as the King’s Highway. This trade route literally ran through the desert of the middle east for thousands of miles. Some ancient king had it marked for troops and trade. It was kind of dangerous and not real smooth but serve its purpose.

Isaiah was declaring that John’s ministry would make a highway for the Messianic King, to travel through the wilderness of our lost humanity, into our heart, where through salvation, the King of kings and Lord of lords would reign.

God did not intend a bumpy ride for the Lord Jesus Christ, so John’s call to repentance, was for the purpose of preparing the heart for King, by leveling pride (mountains brought low), revealing the behavior needing removed from our iniquity and the culturally attached behavior that is contrary to His word (straightening out the crooked places and making the rough places smooth).

Our contemporary theology would declare that this work is all of grace and we simply can do nothing, but in John's ministry repentance was not confessing the wrong and waiting for God to take it out. He commanded we forsake and turn way from sin in practice.

Luke 3:7-14

Note that John preached them into the fear of God and when asked what they should do, John did not say “**wait for the Messiah and accept Him**”. John gave them practical instructions to produce works, which reveal true repentance...

1. Instructing the common folks to express compassion and care for their brethren, rather than the self-focus that crippled God's love.
2. To the tax collectors he commanded they stop treating by charging more than they were supposed to, to make more than their appointed salary.
3. He told the soldiers to stop using their position to extort money and be content with their wages, stop lying and falsely accusing people to gain monetary advantage.

John's preaching led people to fear the LORD, which is the beginning of wisdom; John's language was scary and necessary. We must focus on preaching to reveal sin and open the door for the fear of the Lord and godly sorrow.

All the above behavior is sinful, and John was telling them to stop any sin that was apparently against the Lord. Note, to suggest that this is saving a person through works is asinine. To stop a behavior is a preparatory work to receive the grace of God in Christ, by faith. Only His shed blood can remove sin from our account, declare us justified and set apart.

Jesus preached this truth as well.

Luke 13:1-5

Luke 19:6-10

The early church preached this as well...

Acts 3:17-19

Acts 11:18

Acts 17:30-31

Note that in each of these passages' repentance is necessary to receive the fullness of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. As our minds are changed, we do the work of repenting, which is forsaking and clearing the life of those things we know to be contrary to God. As we do, then we can walk in faith. In the power of His Spirit, He then brings the new life, and we then yield to Him, in loving obedience.

Repentance begins with the knowledge of the Lord, with godly sorrow. It continues with us doing the necessary demolition and removal for our remodel... This Old House.

We meet many people as we share the gospel, weekly, and there is one truth to hold. Should a person have true conviction by the Holy Spirit, you do not have to tell them too much, as to what needs to be forsaken. Godly sorrow demands relief and only repentance cools the heat of the fear of the Lord. In this, they will begin to feel their need for cleansing and power to overcome. Turning to Christ to walk in faith is easy and filled with a joy unspeakable then.

Let us preach them to repentance.