

Repentance: It's Origin, Nature and Design

by Evan Schaible

Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of life, and it comes from God as a gift, requiring a supernatural working of the Spirit of God within a person.

Scripture: Matthew 3:8, Acts 3:19, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 2:13, 1 Timothy 3:9

Topics: "Repentance", "Salvation"

Description

Evan Schaible delves into the origin, nature, and design of repentance, emphasizing that repentance is a divine gift granted by God to sinners, leading to a change of mind and life. He highlights the importance of understanding that repentance is not a condition of salvation but a result of looking to Jesus and experiencing inward regeneration by God. Schaible stresses the need to preach the insufficiency of man and the sufficiency of God in the process of repentance, guiding sinners to cry out for God's mercy and grace.

Transcript

Repentance, It's origin:

The first and fundamental question that we must ask is this - from where does repentance come, and to fully understand this we must first define the word.

Thayer, a well respected lexical scholar defines repentance this way, "a change of mind, as it appears to one who repents, of a purpose he has formed or of something he has done". We, in our misunderstandings and theological immaturity, tend to always add our own prior understanding to something, whether right or wrong, and muddle up the simplicity.

Repentance in the scriptural sense is nothing more than a change of mind that results itself in a change of life. But repentance in and of itself, left alone from it's necessary fruit in only a change of mind.

This is a very important definition as we deal with the question of the origin of repentance. We read Paul's words to Timothy in the 2nd chapter of his first epistle, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth".

If we continue to properly define the Greek word *metanoia* (metanoia) as a change of mind than we see

great illumination upon this passage. We see that God is the one who grants the evangelical grace of repentance to a sinner still in his sin as the very next verse says very clearly, "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

So the only time that a sinner can recover themselves out of the snare of the devil is if God has first granted to them the necessary change of mind. This is of utmost importance regarding the question at hand, the origin of repentance. If repentance comes from man's natural ability to recover themselves out of the snare of the devil than we face a great problem of the order of this passage, which is strikingly reminiscent of Philippians's 2:13, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure". The order of operation is illuminating, first God, than man. First God must grant repentance, and then man bears the fruit of this gracious gift.

We should be preaching that man is dead in their trespasses and sins and must look unto Jesus. That "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities". Again the apostolic mandate in the preaching of repentance is the insufficiency of man and the utter sufficiency of God. That Christ is all and man is nothing at all.

Repentance - It's Nature:

The nature of repentance, now that we are built upon the apostolic foundation, can be rightly considered as we progress. Repentance is two fold:

1. The inward change of mind. This inward change of mind is necessarily prior to the outworking of the change. Why? A sinner is steeped, and dead in his sin, seeking to be justified by his own works, or to just run as far away from God as they see possible. This is the carnal mindset, law-keeping and sinful living. There are these extremes - they are either trying with everything in them to keep the law blameless, or they are blatantly shaking their fist at God endeavoring to rebel as much as possible in a short a time as possible. This is the mindset of the sinner.

With that in mind it is utterly absurd to tell a sinner to stop being carnally minded as they are unable. The reason they are unable is that they are entirely unwilling. Their inability comes from their unwillingness because they hate the God of the Bible with every fiber that is in their unregenerate being.

The inward change of mind must be worked in them prior to the outworking of the fruits of repentance simply because without the one you cannot have the other. Without the God given grace of a changed mind you cannot have the lived out change of life.

2. The outward manifestation of the changed mind. This comes only after the mind is changed. The works that prove your repentance, or as John the Baptist would say, "Fruits meet for repentance", must be borne by a tree that is capable of bearing that particular fruit. Sinners are incapable of bearing good fruit, just as Christians are incapable of bearing evil fruit as long as they abide in the vine.

Jesus clearly says this in his own way, "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit". The impossibility is directly linked with the inability, which proceeds directly out of the unwillingness. This is the vicious chain of the carnal mind. So the will must first be changed in order for the inability to be taken away and thereby bringing a man into a place where he desires holiness and will walk in righteousness. This can only be a work of divine grace.

Once this is done, then and only then will a sinner walk in habitual righteousness whereas before the sinner walked in habitual sin. The sinner is no longer a sinner but is redeemed, and is made a saint. In terms that fit our illustration, the bad tree is hewn down and made a new tree, a good tree. "Behold, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things have passed away and behold, all things become new". Why this language? Because God must recreate the sinner before the sinner can become a saint. And when this word is spoken into the sinner, and the same power is exerted that raised Jesus up from the dead, the sinner is made a new creature, namely a saint. Praise the Lord for His gracious saving power.

Repentance - It's Design:

The design of repentance is not to be preached as a condition of salvation, but the outworking of a changed life when one looks to Jesus, "look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith". Looking to Jesus necessitates a turning away from the world, sin and the devil, hence the only words you hear Peter preach on Pentecost are "repent".

Does this mean that we are not to preach faith in Christ? Certainly not as that would go against the entire tenor of apostolic teaching. Rather repentance in the apostolic sense is not an outward reformation of life that man performs, but an inward regeneration of every aspect of a person that God performs. As the late John Fletcher said, "You need not reformation, what you truly need is regeneration".

So should we command all men to repent? No. We should declare that God commands all men to repent. Just as strongly however we need to declare that the sinner is helpless to do it themselves and hopeless without a supernatural working of the Spirit of God within them. When we tell sinners to stop sinning and then God will save you, we are producing proud, self righteous sinners demanding something from God because of what they have done.

We need to make beggars out of sinners by telling them they are helpless without the power of God. We need to tell them of the sufficiency of Christ to give them what they cannot attain to or obtain themselves so that they cry out as did the publican, "have mercy on me a sinner". Only then will we see genuine conversion and genuine repentance, which abolishes the glorification of man and firmly sets up the glorification of God in every thought, word and deed.

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