

The Foundation of Repentance

by Keith Malcomson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance as a necessary step before faith and forgiveness, and highlights the consequences of not repenting.

Scripture: Matthew 3:2

Topics: "True Repentance", "Christian Salvation"

Description

Keith Malcomson emphasizes the crucial foundation of repentance in the Christian faith, highlighting the necessity of true repentance preceding genuine faith. He stresses the importance of bearing fruits of repentance in our lives as evidence of a true heart change. Malcomson underscores that repentance is the pathway to forgiveness, freedom from sin, and ultimately, salvation, as seen in the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the early Church.

Transcript

Heb.6:1, "...the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God..."

To stand in time and eternity we must have a sure foundation in the present time. We must give earnest heed and deep consideration to these foundations for depending on these foundations we will stand in eternity or perish eternally. Too many people have sat in churches, who are now out in the world, because they did not give heed to these foundations. Do not take these for granted. We must be sure concerning our foundations of faith.

The very Angels, seeing the wheat and the tares growing together: the real converts and the false converts; those who really knew Christ and the hypocrites growing together; could identify the confusion and so asked the Lord if they could go in and separate them but the Lord says, 'No, let them grow until the day of harvest when the weeds will be burnt up, lest by pulling up the tares, the wheat is pulled up' (Mt.13:29-30). God tells them to leave them until the time of harvest. Wheat and tares (weeds) look the same outwardly, but look different after a storm and at harvest time. After a storm, the true wheat can look very battered and bowed over, but the tares remain standing upright. At the time of harvest, the wheat will also be more evident to the trained discerning eye and the tares will be burnt.

The Angels of Heaven rejoice over one sinner who truly repents (Lk.15:10). Angels get frustrated over the counterfeit but just one sinner who truly repents (notice it doesn't say believes it says repents) causes the Angels of Heaven to praise and worship. The angels look for repentance and rejoice when they see it for

they know it leads to life.

True repentance always precedes faith and is always followed by true faith. But repentance is the first foundation and therefore should have priority. If you have not repented, you have simply not been born-again. "...repent and believe..." (Mt.4:17; Mk.1:15). The message of the Gospel is Repent and believe--not just believe--first repent. In the New Testament they never preached 'believe in God' without first preaching repentance.

Paul went forth, "...Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Act 20:21). Both to the Jews and to the Gentiles, Paul made it his priority to preach repentance then he preached faith toward God. All Hell cannot shake the faith which follows repentance.

How Repentance is dealt with in the New Testament

John the Baptist's first message and the beginning of his ministry began with the word repent: (Matthew.3:2) "Repent ye: for the kingdom of God / heaven is at hand." By saying 'kingdom of heaven is at hand' John is saying 'Heaven is so real. The things of God are so real. Eternity is so real. We are on the edge of the Kingdom of God being made manifest, so repent; get your lives right.' When preaching loses the message of repentance preaching is finished. True preaching always begins with repentance and continues with repentance. Mk.1:4, "...preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Without repentance there is no remission of sins.

Repentance is the avenue and the pathway to utter forgiveness, to all your sins being cancelled, to all your guilt being removed, to all your condemnation being relinquished. True repentance sets you free from an eternity in Hell. When a man or woman experiences true repentance, all their sins are forgiven. Trying to believe that all your sins are forgiven is not the issue. Forgiveness comes on the back of true repentance. Without true repentance when a man turns from his sin and truly repents from his heart, there is no forgiveness; without repentance he will be condemned and found guilty. True repentance will always drive you to Christ, drive you to the blood, drive you to the Cross and drive you to forgiveness.

People come to meetings and they say, "I want forgiven. I want to be free from my sins. Pray for me to be free," but without repentance they cannot get free. If you want to be free from condemnation you must repent. Repentance is the pathway to all forgiveness and being set free. All your sins are forgiven on the back of repentance. Repentance is powerful. Repentance liberates us. Repentance brings us to the cleansing blood, the Cross and Christ. There is no point in saying, "Do you want all your sins forgiven? Then just believe in God." That is half a Gospel. The issue is WILL THEY REPENT? There is no point preaching freedom from sin if you do not preach repentance.

John came preaching the Baptism of Repentance and it marked his whole ministry. John the Baptist's preaching might have sounded different from Paul's preaching but everything that John said about Christ was true; it was real. If you had gone down to the river Jordan and heard John preaching, shouting and frothing at the mouth you could be sure he was preaching repentance. People could have said, 'Does John not have another message? I went Monday and he was preaching repentance. I went Tuesday and he was preaching repentance. I went Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and he was preaching repentance.'

For six months John preached repentance until they killed him because he preached against sin. Do not get weary of hearing the message of repentance. Repentance was the message given to John by God. He was consumed with repentance because he knew that he was making a way for the Lamb of God who was going to wash away their sins. He knew he was making a way for the Baptizer in the Holy Ghost. He knew that repentance was preparing the hearts and making their hearts ready for the living God. His whole vision, goal and dream was to make ready a people. In order for the people to be prepared to receive the Gospel, repentance had to be preached. Repentance prepares the heart; prepares the mind; prepares the life for God. Without repentance you cannot meet God face to face. You cannot have God draw near you unless you have repented. It would be a fearful and terrible thing to draw near to God without repenting.

In Matthew 3:8, John preached, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:" In other words, bring forth fruits that show me that you have repented. The men and women on the banks of the Jordan could not have just walked down to John and said, "Baptise me, John, because I believe your message." No, they had to bring forth fruits. They had to demonstrate that they had repented. John would have asked them to prove it by their lifestyle.

John said, "I am going to baptise you in water. I am looking at the outward. I'm looking at you. I'm listening to you but if you have really repented, prove it in your life; prove it in your home; prove it over the next six months." By their fruit you shall know them. John knew that if a man or woman truly repented in their heart that he would see it. Somebody who has repented does not carry on in the same old life or habits. A radical change comes with repentance. We can look at someone and know that something has happened to them. When people in the world see the change in you they may not understand it but they will notice a change.

Again, it is not an outward change: a man can come forward at an altar call and cry, but if he has not repented in his heart we will not see a change. When someone professes a change, I go looking for that fruit after six months or a year down the road. That is simply wise.

John, in Matthew 3:10, says, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." The Axe is the symbol of repentance, just like the Cross is the symbol of Christ's work on the Cross or the dove the symbol of the Holy Spirit. An axe is for cutting down trees.

Some time ago I asked my wife to go to the hardware store and buy me an axe so that I could cut down some trees. Upon her return however, she handed me a hatchet. I told her that what she had purchased was not an axe and I described to her what an axe was; that it was at least three times the length of the hatchet she had bought and that the hatchet was just for lopping off branches, whereas the bigger instrument, an axe, would enable me to chop down trees. This was news to her as through the years she had called a hatchet an axe and an axe a hatchet. This has happened with the word repentance in many churches today. We are confused over the word repentance. We think it is alright just to say, "Oh Lord, I'm sorry, just forgive me," but then you carry on living the same way. God will ask, "What is that? It is not true repentance." My wife soon learnt that an axe and a hatchet are similar but they are not the same. A hatchet is a smaller version of an axe but useless for the task I had. A hatchet cannot do what an axe can do!

John says, "...now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Mt.3:10-11). If we do not experience the axe of

repentance, we will experience the axe of God's judgment cutting us down and taking us in to Hell. Repentance is a violent thing. Repentance is an issue of zeal; if you want to repent for your sin or an issue in your heart or an issue in your mind and you know that God commands you to repent, then REPENT!

A man or woman must say, 'I have had enough of anger in my life.' Or, 'I have had enough of gossip in my life.' Or, 'I have had enough of un-forgiveness in my life.' Or 'I have had enough of lust or jealousy in my life.' Whatever re-occurring issue in your life which you have said, 'I have had enough!' If it keeps coming back, the man must take an axe to that issue. It must be torn down, not pruned.

All of the contemporary ministries of counselling, deliverance and 'Inner Healing' or should I say psychology, just prune a branch or pluck off a leaf, but the true message of repentance lays an axe to the root and brings the whole tree down. Most of these ministries never set people free from sin.

We must keep the blade of our axe sharp and we need to keep it with us at all times so that when something starts to come into our heart, we can lay the axe of repentance to the root. We must not tolerate that attitude or thing in our heart, life or mind. The axe of repentance is an act without sympathy.

Again, if we do not repent like that, then God will take an axe and by His judgement take us down to Hell.

Jesus Christ began his preaching ministry with the word and teaching of repentance. Matthew.4:17, "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When you begin with something you carry on with it. It doesn't just say that he began with it and left it. He continued with this message throughout his ministry on earth and left us with this message. Jesus never stopped preaching repentance. His whole life he preached repentance which is why they crucified Him.

Christ's last message on earth after His death and resurrection was the very same, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke.24:47). He is saying, preach repentance in Jerusalem, preach it in Judea, preach it in Samaria, preach it in the city of Rome, preach it out across the Roman Empire, preach repentance and remission of sins everywhere. Again, before you preach remission, or God forgiving your sins, or Grace, or God loving you, preach repentance. This was Christ's last instruction to the Church and He has not changed His orders. He does not give us permission to tone down the preaching or to just speak about forgiveness. Oh no! He said to His church, 'Everywhere you go preach repentance'. Some say, "Ah, but the Muslim doesn't need to hear repentance. The English don't need to hear repentance. Cultures are different. Repentance is an old-fashioned message..." Oh yes, it is old-fashioned but it is for every soul irrespective of religion or culture.

Christ's LAST MESSAGE was repentance. In Revelation 3:19, (to the Church of Laodicea) "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Even from Heaven, Christ was preaching repentance to the Church. NOTE: to the Church Christ was preaching repentance--not just to the sinner, not just to the man wanting forgiveness, but to the church of Laodicea. This church was on the go for at least 60 years when Christ preached this to them. It was a church birthed out of a revival which had begun in Ephesus 60 years earlier. Just think of all the preaching and teaching they had received in the previous 60 years yet here is Christ preaching repentance to them because they were cold, lukewarm and backslidden.

Christ calls five of the seven churches of Asia to repentance. Only 60 years after the beginning of those seven churches, Christ brings five of them the message of repentance. Those five are told of the

consequences of not repenting. eg: if you do not repent I will remove the candlestick...if you do not repent I will come against you...I will fight against you...if you do not repent I will come as a thief in the night when you will not expect me to come...these are all 'church people' who say they have known these things for many years. There was something seriously wrong with the foundation of five of these seven churches. Five have neglected repentance as a part of church life. Wrong doctrine, wrong attitudes, wrong lifestyle and wrong order in the church was to be dealt with through repentance. The only way back to God's order and the only way to true revival is by the way of repentance. The Church of today does need to hear a message of repentance.

The Early Church

The day of Pentecost was a miraculous, supernatural act of God but somebody still had to get up and preach repentance. Peter's first message on that day, in the midst of revival and after the crowd had cried out, "What must we do?" was, "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 2:38)

Miracles are not enough. Supernatural tongues or manifestations are not enough--repentance must be preached. When revival comes we must continue to preach and teach. Some revivals of history made the mistake that once God had come in power, they ceased to preach and teach as they used to and this is a great danger. We must preach more in revival than we do before revival. So Peter said, 'If you want to receive the supernatural gift of the Holy Ghost then you must repent.'

Do you know that this was Simon the Sorcerer's problem? He wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Ghost but Peter discerned that he had never truly repented and been born-again. Peter told him that his issue was repentance. Peter told Simon, 'Your money perish with you, Simon--you are still in the bond of iniquity...' (Acts 20:20-23). Simon believed--oh yes, he believed--but he had not repented. This was not a saving faith. You can have an intellectual faith; you can have an emotional faith but you can lack a true faith. Simon the Sorcerer had never repented of his heart attitudes so he brought these very attitudes into the church and now wanted to operate the same way as previously only under a Christian veneer.

Peter was a preacher of repentance. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). If you want your sins blotted out you must repent. If you want to be converted, repent. Repentance is the first foundation.

Talking to Simon the Sorcerer, Peter said, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness..." (Acts 8:22). Peter is clear in telling Simon that he had never repented or dealt with his heart. Now Simon believed what he heard and wanted to see the community changed; he wanted to go to heaven, he had been baptised in water but Peter knew the issue in his heart was repentance which is why there was still wickedness in his heart. Wickedness still controlled his thoughts, his emotions and his feelings but it was covered in a religious veneer. We must destroy wickedness through repentance--that is the only cure.

Then Paul, as he looks back over 20 years of ministry says: "...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" (Acts 26:20). So in every region, community and in every church where Paul went in those 20 years he preached repentance and looked for the fruits of repentance in the way they were living. He looked for them to bring forth those works.

Christianity without repentance is no Christianity at all. It needs to be put back in to the Evangelism. We do not need to find a more contemporary or milder word than the good old-fashioned term 'repentance'.

William Booth (1829-1912) said: "I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration...and Heaven without an Eternal Hell." Mr Booth was right. 'Just come and believe and God will forgive you,' is the half message out there today. In reality they are saying 'You don't need to change your attitude. You don't need to be broken over your sin. It doesn't matter how you live...'

Acts 17:30, "but now [God] commandeth all men every where to repent:" This is a command of God. This is the New Covenant. This is the Grace and Love of God. Because God loves us He commands us to repent. The message of repentance is an expression of the Love of God. To preach repentance is not a preaching of works. It is not an exhortation to do something before forgiveness as some have mockingly accused. Repentance is a gift from God and He grants it to all those who He intends to lead into all every blessing and provision of Calvary (Acts 5:31; 11:18; II Tim.2:25).

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