

The Truth About Repentance Will Set You Free

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes the critical importance of repentance in the Christian faith as a transformative act that reconnects believers with God.

Scripture: Psalm 66:18, Matthew 3:2, Mark 6:7, Luke 13:5, Acts 3:19

Topics: "Repentance", "Sanctification"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the crucial role of repentance in the Christian walk, highlighting the attempts by some to redefine or remove the concept to make Christianity more culturally acceptable. He stresses that biblical repentance involves turning from sin and turning to God, a condition of the heart that is essential for true transformation. Idleman warns against the dangers of rebellion and disobedience, emphasizing that genuine repentance is a gift from God that impacts every aspect of our lives, setting us against all sin and leading to a right relationship with God.

Transcript

"You can be certain that at the forefront of every significant recovery from backsliding...the doctrine of repentance has been among the precious truths that God has quickened and used" (Richard Owen Roberts).

Believe it or not, many Christian leaders are seeking to remove the word "repent." Apparently, we need to rethink our narrow view of the gospel and our restricted view of Biblical hermeneutics, so they say. Their rescripting seems ridiculous, but it's true. They argue that "repentance" may not actually mean what we think. In reality, it's no surprise that they take this position--in order for Christianity to appear palatable and less intrusive to our culture, many feel that we need to rethink, redefine, and rename difficult truths, including repentance.

I often preach about the desperate need for repentance--it's one of the hallmarks of my ministry--as a result, I'm often labeled "hard-core," "extreme," "un-loving," and "narrow-minded." But nothing could be further from the truth...I simply want to see people changed and transformed by the power of God through repentance. Richard Owen Roberts states it well, "The Lord has been so deeply grieved by the refusal of the church to faithfully proclaim the whole counsel of His word in the power of the Holy Spirit that He has largely withdrawn from the church and left her to her own devices."

Whether the word for repentance is *nocham* in the Old Testament, or *metanoē* in the New, biblical repentance involves turning from sin and turning to God--it's a condition of the heart. Acts 3:19 unapologetically confirms this: "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Jesus said that "unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5). The influential Baptist evangelist, John R. Rice (1895-1980), said, "There is no way you can please God, no way you can have the sweet communion with Him to get your prayers answered if you are in rebellion against the known will of God." Failing to turn from sin and turn to Christ results in rebellion against God.

When Mark 6:12 records that, "they went out and preached that people should repent," Jesus wasn't suggesting that the disciples rethink their narrow-mindedness, redefine their view of sin, or reinterpret the meaning of repentance. He was saying that people need to turn from sin and turn to God. To suggest that everyone from the Old Testament prophets to Christ and the apostles, to the early church fathers and the reformers, to present day scholars and theologians, misunderstood the real meaning of repentance, is the height of arrogance and deception. I'd respect people more if they'd just say that they don't like the concept of repentance rather than trying to reinterpret its already crystal clear meaning.

Repentance is a true gift from God that affects everything in our lives. If our priorities, our passions, our goals, our dreams, and our desires are not changing--are we changing? I only say this because so many today have religion and not a true relationship with Christ. They are simply going through the motions. They have never truly repented. It's been said that if your religion has not changed your life, change your religion. Do we truly "know" Jesus Christ (relationship), or do we only know "about" Him (religion)?

"The gospel, when rightly understood and received, sets the heart against all sin" (Matthew Henry). I John 2:15 declares, "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." A disobedient life should raise concerns. A.W. Tozer said it this way, "The idea that God will pardon a rebel who has not given up his rebellion is contrary both to the Scriptures and to common sense." (See 2 Thessalonians 1:8.)

Repentance is not an outdated, irrelevant word--it's a very relevant word from the heart of God. Isaiah 59:2 reveals that, "your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." Psalm 66:18 adds: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Jesus as well as John the Baptist both began their ministry by proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). They openly encouraged people to turn from sin and to turn toward God. However, in order for Christianity to appear enticing and less intrusive to our postmodern culture, difficult truths, including repentance, are minimized, or avoided. They fail to realize that repentance opens the line of communication between God and man. This is the lifeline for our dying world. It's not our hold on God but rather God's hold on us that secures us.

Jesus compared those who did not repent with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, saying that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for those who did not repent (Mark 6:7-12). No guesswork here.

Some even suggest that repentance is self-improvement or a call to fulfill our natural potential. When we repent we do improve, and our God-given potential becomes more apparent, but repentance is not about self-improvement--it's about renouncing sin and turning from it. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change in action--brokenness, genuine sorrow over sin, and humility are marks of sincere repentance. Lasting hope and joy are also by-products of a right relationship with God, beginning with "repentance."

This is nothing to fear but to cherish. There is always a link between genuine faith and sincere repentance. The truth about repentance will set you free.

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