



“Except Ye Repent”

Jim O'Connor

*"And the times of this ignorance God winked at;
but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).*

"...except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5).

Scriptures such as the above tell us in no uncertain terms what God's attitude is toward the practice of things that he does not endorse. Such practices must be changed! We must conform to God's will for us. John the baptizer was a preacher of repentance (Matthew 3:2), Jesus preached it (Mark 1:15), the apostles preached it (Acts 2:38), and God expects it to be implemented in the lives of people who care about their destiny.

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is simply a change of mind concerning sin that results in a change of life. The gospel is designed to produce godly sorrow in those who will permit it to do so (2 Corinthians 7:10). Then, godly sorrow produces repentance. Admittedly, repentance is easier to define than it is to practice. Someone once remarked that if given one wish, they would wish for the power to make people repent. It doesn't work that way. God has only one power designed for that — the gospel — and he will not set aside the right of free moral agency in man. It is a choice — granted a necessary choice but a choice nevertheless.

REPENTANCE IS PLEASING

Jesus said, in Luke 15:7, that *"joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."* I'm sure that not much in this world brings joy to the heart of God. He even regretted having made us (Genesis 6:6)! However, repentance does bring him joy. The joy at the "homecoming" of the prodigal son in Luke 15:20 illustrates the

pleasure of God at the return of one lost soul. Do you want to please God? Then repent of practices he doesn't approve of!

REPENTANCE IS PRODUCTIVE

Repentance is sometimes defined as "turning your back on sin". This is inaccurate because it is inadequate. Repentance is not simply stopping the practice doing of evil. It must be followed by doing good. Jesus taught, "*When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first*" (Luke 11:24-26). The bad moved out but the good didn't move in. When repentance is genuine, it will be productive of good. Repentance improves one's life.

REPENTANCE IS PERSONAL

Simon was told to "**repent therefore of this thy wickedness**" (Acts 8:22). We cannot repent for any one other than ourselves (even though there are many cases where we would wish for such privilege) nor can others repent for us. David prayed "**...cleans me from my sin**" (Psalms 51:2). It was his and none could repent in his behalf or in his stead.

REPENTANCE IS POSSIBLE

God does not demand from us that which is impossible for us to perform. The doctrine of "Calvinistic Predestination" which teaches that those elected to eternal damnation cannot possibly repent is a false and dangerous doctrine which slanders the very nature of God. Peter wrote that "The Lord...is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Those who say they "cannot" are actually saying they "will not." Do you want to repent? Then, **JUST DO IT!**

REPENTANCE IS PREFERRED

The text just quoted above, as well as the earlier text quoted from Luke 13:3,5 informs us that repent or perish are the only two options open to each person. There is no third choice available. Those who stubbornly cling to the practice of their pet sins will answer for those sins before God (2 Corinthians 5:10). The choice is heaven or hell. Which do you prefer? If heaven, then repentance is the preferred choice.

OF WHAT DO I NEED TO REPENT?

Are you lying, stealing, cheating, etc.? If so, you need to repent. Are you doing all the good you can? If not, you need to repent. Are you practicing things in religion that God has not authorized? If so, then you need to repent. If there is anything in your life that God will not bless, then you need to work on getting rid of it.

Are you a Christian? If not, then you need to **believe** that Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24), **repent** of sin (Luke 13:3,5), **confess** your faith (Matthew 10:32), and **be baptized** for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Are you are a child of God but are not faithful? Then you need to **repent** and pray to God for forgiveness (Acts 8:22). Repentance is not always easy, but it is always wise.

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