

Hell's Best Kept Secret

Many people say the sinner's prayer over and over again and don't live changed lives. Nothing happened, but they think they will go to heaven. How can this be so?

The full gospel is not being preached, they are deceived (they deceive themselves) into thinking they are saved. There is no fruit in their lives, no evidence, you can't tell them apart from the people of the world that make no such claims. Are they covert Christians or are they just real good actors? Or are they deceived? Inside their hearts they know something is wrong. They're told, "Don't worry you said all the right words." But, the poor pastor is spending all his time counseling them because they are not born of the Spirit. No wonder these people make no headway even after years of fruitless counseling. These people need to be saved, not coddled!

Today's modern preaching styles promise new converts wonderful perks: life improvement, prosperity, marriages will improve, and everything will be rosy. The Bible does say that all these benefits belong to the Godly. It also says there will be persecution. When persecution does come and all those 'life improvements' don't materialize as fast as expected, or at all, disillusionment sets in. The new 'christian' falls away.

Statistics prove there is an 80-90% fall-away rate. We have created 800 to 900 new "backsliders" out of every thousand new 'decisions' for Christ. Of the 10 to 20% that still come to church only 3% of the 10-20% are truly committed, active on-fire workers; true converts. What we have done is to immunize a large portion of the population against the true gospel of Jesus Christ. They are almost without hope now, worse than if they had never heard this defective "fairytale gospel" in the first place.

The Ten Commandments are taught as just good advice having no consequences when not followed. This is hell's best kept secret. Telling people that God is only a God of mercy and not a God of justice. Implying He is not a Holy God that demands that we live holy lives. Suggesting He's your buddy and winks at your sins and would certainly never throw you into hell.

Without teaching the consequences of the law we won't get true converts, but will get a lot of 'decisions for Christ'. Decisions for the 'good life'. Who wouldn't want all those benefits for just saying a few little words? Something for nothing? You bet! You will get lots of takers but few heart-felt true conversions.

Preaching the sugar coated gospel is like trying to coax a criminal out of a building with candy. Instead, we must preach, "You have broken God's laws and have to stand before Him in judgement." You will stand before Jesus, our Judge. He warned us, more than any other, about hell and judgement. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21. "So come out with your hands up high" in surrender.

Most people think they are good and have no need of a savior. It's meaningless that Jesus died a suffering death for them. He must have died for someone else that is really bad, not them. The preaching of the law of God, the Ten Commandments, truly shows people how dirty they are and how much they need the Savior, Jesus Christ.

The clear preaching of God's laws causes sinners to tremble. This is the lawful use of the law. To show them that they are sinners. The law cannot save them, it is a teacher, it is a mirror. With the law we compare ourselves to God's standards not our own. We don't look too bad when we compare ourselves to Hitler, or the wife-beater, or the drug addict. We feel pretty good about ourselves. The Bible says that we sin against God not against man. What about that? When you steal from your neighbor or cheat on your taxes, or lust after another woman, you are breaking the Commandments. You are breaking God's laws--sinning against God! not man. King David, when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah, said he sinned against God only. And he asked for mercy.

This tells us that true repentance messages were lost with the onset of the peaches-and-cream style modern gospel. Ray Comfort illustrates with clarity and humor, the powerful effects of preaching the law and the consequences of breaking it. And that you can't avoid or ignore it either, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Proverbs 28:9.

Is Hell-Fire-Insurance True Repentance?

Again, there is an 80 to 90 percent fall-away rate for this kind of evangelism. Worse yet is that these converts go into churches that entertain them and pamper them further, in essence, keeping them away from true repentance which is needed to become truly born again.

97 percent of so-called Christians do not witness their faith in Jesus Christ. Ray Comfort tells how to change this in his interview (see below) with Sid Roth.

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Ray Comfort has written a simple book, "Hell's Best Kept Secret", that shows us how Jesus used the law, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." D.L. Moody said, "I can always tell a man who is near the kingdom of God; his mouth is stopped."

Repentance: You'll Know It When You See It!

by Rev. Bill Prater

There seems to be, much to the pleasure of the Lord I am sure, a rise in the emphasis placed upon repentance in connection with salvation. How one can deny the doctrine of repentance and the need of such in regards to salvation is beyond me, yet there are those who manage to do it. To my knowledge I do not have among those whom I would consider acquaintances and friends in the ministry, any who would deny the importance of this great Bible doctrine. While they may not use the word "repentance" in every sermon (neither do I), they do believe that when one is made a "new creature" in Christ Jesus, there will be a change. No change, no salvation.

The differences that exist among those whom I would consider acquaintances and friends in the ministry are not in accepting the doctrine of repentance but in defining "repentance" itself. When one brother attempts to define the term, inevitably another will disagree with him, saying that it goes much further or that it means much more than the definition given.

The problem that arises in defining "repentance" is that there is no definition given in the Bible. Therefore, one must resort to extra-Biblical sources for a definition. While there is nothing wrong with this approach, we must remember that anytime we go outside of the Word of God for a definition, we are stepping outside of the realm of inspiration. Within the confines of Scripture there is no room for argument or opinion; however, the same cannot be said when we step outside the boundaries of the infallible, inerrant, Word of God. Men can, and do, argue opinion quite often.

Defining "repentance" would be much easier had one of the "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" and said "Repentance is...", as they did in Hebrews 11:1 where we read "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.", or in 1 John 3:4 where we find that "...sin is the transgression of the law." Since the Lord did not choose to define repentance for us, we are left to our own efforts in trying to explain what God meant when He used the word "repent."

Many are the definitions that one could find of the word "repentance." For example, consider these definitions taken from the Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity:

"Repentance is neither sorrow without change, nor change without sorrow, but it is such a deep feeling of sorrow as gives rise to a determination to change, or, as the English Church Catechism has it, 'repentance whereby we forsake sin'" (Robert B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament).

"Repentance is a change of mind or purpose. Until a man repents he commonly feels comfortable about himself and his ways; but when the Saviour, through the Spirit, gives him repentance, he changes his mind about himself, and seeing nothing good in his heart or in his works, his whole soul cries out, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner' (Lk. 18:13) (William Cathcart, The Baptist Encyclopedia, p. 971).

"This saving repentance is an evangelical grace, whereby a person, being by the Holy Spirit made sensible of the manifold evils of his sin, doth, by faith in Christ, humble himself for it with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrency, praying for pardon and strength of grace, with a purpose and endeavor, by supplies of the Spirit, to walk before God unto all well-pleasing in all things" (Philadelphia Confession of Faith, 1742).

“Repentance has been described as ‘a change of mind Godward that leads to a judgment of self and one’s acts’ (1 Ki. 8:47; Eze. 14:6; Mt. 3:2; 9:13; Lk. 15:7; Ac. 20:21; 2 Co. 7:9,10). This would not be possible but for the thought of mercy in God. It is the goodness of God that leads to repentance (Ro. 2:4)” (Concise Bible Dictionary).

“Real penitence; sorrow or deep contrition for sin, as an offense and dishonor to God, a violation of his holy law, and the basest ingratitude towards a Being of infinite benevolence. This is accompanied and followed by amendment of life” (Noah Webster, American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828).

As you can see, the definitions of repentance are many. I cannot help but think that God must get a chuckle (forgive me for being so carnal as to think that God Almighty might actually chuckle) out of our attempts to define something that He did not choose to define Himself. So what do we do with this thing of repentance? I contend that while we may or may not be able to properly define it, we will know it when we see it.

In 2 Corinthians 7:8-11, we find perhaps the most concise discourse on “repentance” in all of the New Testament. In verse 10 Paul writes, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” Understanding the difference between “godly sorrow” and “the sorrow of the world” is the key, in my opinion, to a proper understanding of repentance as a whole. Three things can be said of “godly sorrow.” **First of all**, “godly sorrow” is that sorrow which arises as the result of seeing sin as God sees it. Sin is not a mistake, it is not a fault, it is not a flaw in character, sin is wicked and vile and offensive to God. The English language does not possess enough adjectives to adequately describe God’s view of sin.

Secondly, “godly sorrow” is that sorrow which arises as the result of our seeing that our sin was not against another human being, but that it was against a holy and righteous God. Consider David’s words in Psalm 51:4, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” David’s sin was not against Bathsheba or Uriah, it was against God. David may have hurt Bathsheba and most assuredly he hurt her husband Uriah, but the worst part of David’s sin was that he committed it against God.

“There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” This was Joseph’s reply to the request of Potiphar’s wife found in Genesis 39:9. Notice that Joseph did not consider the possibility of committing adultery with Potiphar’s wife as a sin against her or her husband, but against God.

Thirdly, “godly sorrow” is that sorrow which leads a person to God. It leads a person to seek His forgiveness.

The “sorrow of the world” on the other hand, is that sorrow that arises as the result of losing something or from being disappointed. It arises as the result of being overwhelmed by guilt, but it does not lead to God.

By definition, the differences between “godly sorrow” and the “sorrow of the world” are obvious. The two are easily distinguished. However, in real life, determining what is “godly sorrow” and what is the “sorrow of the world” is not that easy, because in many cases they both look the same. They both include sorrow. They both include regret. They both include tears. They both include apologies. They both include many of the same things. So how do we tell the difference? I submit that only time will tell.

I doubt if there has been a church or a pastor anywhere that has not met with this dilemma. They see what appears to be “godly sorrow”, and based upon what they see they continue to lead an individual through the Scriptures, eventually leading them to what they feel is a genuine confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. The next Sunday rolls around and this one who had shown what was thought to be “godly sorrow” is nowhere to be found. In some cases it may be more than one Sunday, but eventually this person seemingly disappears, and what was thought to have been “godly sorrow” was nothing of the sort. In this case, time did indeed tell the true story. What was mistaken as “godly sorrow” was nothing more than the “sorrow of the world.”

Repentance will be known as real or fraudulent by the fruit that it produces. The great apostle Paul brings this out very clearly in 2 Corinthians 7:11. Genuine repentance produces the following things:

CAREFULNESS

This word properly denotes speed or haste; then diligence or earnest effort. In the case of these Corinthians it denotes the diligence with which they set out to remove the sin that existed. They didn't sit around feeling sorry for themselves or waiting for some supernatural act of God, they got busy putting away sin. When under the influence of "godly sorrow", a person will not sit around waiting for the right conditions or the right occasion, they'll move swiftly and diligently to rid their life of sin.

CLEARING OF YOURSELVES

When an individual experiences "godly sorrow" for sin, they will do whatever it takes to prove themselves clear in the matter of sin. They will so live their lives that there will not be any doubt in the minds of anybody as to where they are in relation to sin.

INDIGNATION

Not against God. Not against the one who delivered the rebuke. But indignation against the sin itself. The truly repentant person will develop a very strong hatred for that sin which caused their downfall.

FEAR

As one writer put it, "An awful fear of God, a cautious fear of sin, and a jealous fear of themselves." An awful fear of God in the sense that they were fearful of displeasing Him. A cautious fear of sin, being aware of the subtlety with which sin creeps into our lives. A jealous fear of self, lest they should fall back into the same sin. Someone once said, "True repentance has a double aspect; it looks upon things past with a weeping eye, and upon the future with a watchful eye."

VEHEMENT DESIRE

This is a desire to put away sin and to get back on track for the Lord.

ZEAL

David said, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." I believe that the zeal produced by true repentance is a zeal to once again be found in favor with God. The songwriter put it like this: "Fill me with fire, where once I burned with shame."

REVENGE

Revenge against sin and the devil. The easiest way to get revenge on the devil is to serve God. Paul concluded verse 11 by saying, "In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." Indeed, men may differ somewhat in their definitions of "repentance", but all will be able to know when they see it.

I would like to add a footnote to what I've said here concerning "repentance." So much of the emphasis seems to be on repentance in salvation as if there is no need for repentance in the lives of the saved. This simply is not so. This is my own private opinion publically addressed, but I believe that there are people in our Independent Baptist churches who are saved, but have left their "first love" as did the folks in the church at Ephesus. The Lord's instruction to them was very simple, REPENT. Repentance will ALWAYS accompany genuine salvation, but the need for it does not stop there.

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