

A BAD WORD THESE DAYS!!! - OR IS IT?

I know that there are many varying thoughts about the different things concerning the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and His ways. These days have brought to the Body of Christ many “new” doctrines or “thinkings” concerning God and His ways. Some I can look into and see where they may be coming from and believe that they have some merit. Others are out of “left field.” I do not know where they get their thinking or logic from other than they are getting it from

their own thoughts and ideas about God and His ways – or they are being used by the enemy to “deceive even the elect.” One of those areas that I would like to discuss is the area of “repentance.”

This has become a major issue for many within the Body of Christ. There has been much division within the Body concerning this issue. There has come into the Body of Christ “new revelations” and “new understandings” of God and His Word that have suddenly risen up within the Body concerning this most important topic.

I guess what I am simply saying is that there has risen up within the Body of Christ, the thinking of many, that there is absolutely, positively no need any longer for the Body of Christ to discuss or even bring up the term, “repentance.” There are teachings that are being brought forth; Bibles that are being rewritten; but most importantly, I believe, there are many, many people who are being deceived and drawn away from God and His truth as found within His Word by unlearned, as well as, unscrupulous people. This is taking place by unknowing people who are not aware of the truth and are speaking falsities. However, most importantly there are those who are truly out to, “point blank,” deceive people. They are workers iniquity and of the forces of darkness who know full well what they are saying and doing is incorrect.

We first must grasp and truly comprehend what exactly is meant by the term “repentance.” The definition of the word “repent” or “repentance” comes from both the Hebrew and the Greek. The Hebrew is used in the Old Testament and its definition comes from word, *nāḥam*, which is a verb and means - to be sorry, to console one’s own self; to regret; to comfort and be comforted; to ease one’s own self. The Greek word used in the New Testament is, *metanoō*, which means to think differently; to reconsider (morally, feel compunction); to feel sorry that one has done something. So we can see that, in both aspects, to “repent” means to totally change your mind because you regretted or were truly sorry for what you have done.

As we see in both of our definitions the main aspect, or shall we say the result of “repenting,” is to recognize the wrong that we have done and first “own up” to it. What I mean by this is that as soon as we recognize the error, or really the sin that I have done, I must go immediately to my Lord, my God. Now, I know that as a child of God, my salvation is not in jeopardy. However, sin will definitely affect my relationship with God. Yes, He loves me with an unconditional love. However, I am never to take that love for granted.

Therefore, I go to Him and let Him know what I have done. Why? It is because I do not take the love that my God has for me for granted. That is where I believe many so called believers are missing it today. They simply think that they can do anything because God loves them. That is so true - God loves everyone. However, that does not make them His child nor does it make what they do alright with Him.

If we remember John 3:16, it tells us that God “so loved the world” – that is why He sent Jesus. However, as it tells us in John 1:10-11 that the world did not all truly love Him. If an individual truly loves someone, they will do anything and everything they need to express, show and do what pleases the one they love. It is the same with God. If we truly love Him, with all our heart, with all our soul and with all that is within me than I will express that love to Him.

When I do mess up (sin), I know that He is not angry with me and He is not going to get rid of me. However, because I truly love Him, I go and admit what I have done even though I know that He has already forgiven me. You see that is what a true relationship is all about. That is how we are to be with our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord. That is true “agape” love – the God kind of love that He expresses and gives to us.

Jesus expressed the importance of repentance for a person’s true salvation in his conversation with one of the religious leaders named Nicodemus in John 3. Nicodemus was a Pharisee however he was truly a man who was seeking after God. Nicodemus was under the belief that their Messiah would soon come to save the Jewish people from the rule of the Romans and to establish the Jewish Kingdom again on the earth.

It is important for us to understand that the term “Messiah” was the title that would be given to the person who would come and be chosen of God to restore the Kingdom of Israel back to the Jewish people. We must truly grasp the fact that the term “Messiah” meant that the person who would be the Messiah would be a man born by natural means who would grow and be chosen by God to lead the Jewish people out of their bondage and restore Israel back to being a sovereign nation once more.

As we look at Jesus, yes He was the Messiah but He was also, and more importantly, the Son of God. We must grasp the fact that Jesus’ most important “mission” when He came to this earth was first to be the Son of God. This means that He came not to simply restore the Jewish kingdom but it was to bring God’s Kingdom upon this earth to the Jewish people first but also to all the people upon the earth (Gentiles). We must grasp, understand and **believe the fact** that Jesus was both 100% man but He was also, and more importantly, 100% God. That is why Jesus was born of Mary but the “seed” was God.

Jesus came to re-establish God’s Kingdom in the hearts and minds of the people upon this earth – both then and now, to both the Jewish people and the Gentiles. Yes, He was the Jewish Messiah. That would be His role as the Son of Man/ Messiah. However, Jesus’ role was not to simply establish the Jewish Kingdom but rather establish God’s Kingdom upon this earth and to all the people as the Son of God.

Jesus came to the “Jewish people first” as 100% man to establish and fulfill His role as the Son of Man/ Messiah. However, His main mission was to come, 100%, as the Son of God, whereby accomplishing the task of restoring the relationship between God and man. In doing so Jesus, being 100% man and 100% God, became the one and only perfect, pure and therefore, final sacrifice for the sin of all men when He went to the cross.

We must understand that when Adam and Eve sinned, their true punishment should have been immediate death. Why? It is because that is what sin’s outcome is. It brings both spiritual death and physical death. God, in His great love and mercy gave man another shot at restoring the relationship between God and man. He did not destroy man (Adam and Eve) but rather He sent them out of the Garden before they ate of the Tree of Life which would have sealed man’s doom and to be separated from God for eternity.

Instead, God sent them out of the Garden with the promise of One who would come and “*bruise thy head*” of the devil. (Genesis 3:15) God proclaimed that Jesus would die on the cross but would not remain dead. He would rise again, thereby defeating and crushing the head of the devil. This is the first “prophecy” spoken by God, the Father, Himself, proclaiming the Good News of salvation that would one day come. Salvation and the restoration of the relationship between God and man would come through His only Son, the only one perfect to be the final sacrifice - Jesus.

As we return back to the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3, we see that Jesus tries to explain the process of restoring the relationship between God and man. We see in John 3:3 that Jesus tells Nicodemus that the individual must be “born again” if they desire to see the Kingdom of God.

We then hear Nicodemus' startled reply as he states and asks how can a man go back into his mother's womb and be born all over again. We see that through this statement, Nicodemus was looking at things in and through his "natural understanding." Jesus was speaking in a whole different realm – the spirit realm.

We read that Jesus then tries to clarify His statement to Nicodemus with a statement, or rather a scripture that Nicodemus should have immediately been familiar with. We read in John 3:5 that Jesus states, "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" Jesus thinks this explanation should have been enough for Nicodemus. Nicodemus still doesn't get it.

Indeed, Jesus rebukes Nicodemus for not understanding, even though he is a "teacher of Israel" (John 3:9–10). As a learned Pharisee, Nicodemus had studied what we would call the Old Testament, along with a great deal of additional theological reflection. From all this learning, what should Nicodemus have picked up from Jesus' words that should have given him a much better understanding of what Jesus was talking about? After all, it was found in the Jewish scriptures that Nicodemus should have known. Let's see.

The question to ask is this: where do "water" and "the Spirit" come together in the Old Testament in a context that promises a new beginning? There are several examples, but the most obvious is Ezekiel 36:25–28 which states, "*Then will I sprinkle clean **water** upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.* ²⁶ *A new heart also will I give you, and a **new spirit** will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.* ²⁷ *And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.* ²⁸ *And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and **ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.***

The key to this passage is found in verse 28 as Ezekiel states, "*...ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.*" This phrase is found throughout the Old and the New Testament. It is the basis for the covenant that God has and wants to re-establish with His beloved creation – Man. This is the message of the covenant - spoken and written throughout the Old Testament and reaffirmed in the New Testament. It will become finalized at the end of the age, even after the 1000 year rule and reign of Jesus. It will be declared and finalized in the New Jerusalem as we see in Revelation 21:3, "*And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and **they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.***"

This is the great and final result. It is the ending of everything we presently have and it is the beginning of a "New Day" with God forever and ever in the New Jerusalem. However, it begins with the sprinkling of "*...clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*" To truly be "born again" the individual must first repent for who they truly are – are lost sinner.

A person must first grasp and understand that fact. It is only then that they can truly say to God that they repent – they choose to turn from their evil and wicked ways. However, we cannot do it on our own. We need Help. We need to believe and accept what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus alone took all my sins upon Him on that cross and took the punishment that was and is rightfully mine.

But... But... Praise God!! Jesus rose again!!! He rose to present Himself and to give to God the sacrifices of bread and wine – that God had accepted on the Feast of Bikkurim, that first Resurrection Sunday. We must believe that Jesus rose and is now seated on the right hand of the Father and that He is waiting to come again at the appointed time. If the individual truly believes that, then God will give them, "*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.* ²⁷ *And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*" (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

Jesus declares that if a person truly believes and accepts this they will be “born again.” That is what it truly means to be “born again.” It means to be “born from above” which literally means that all of your sins have been forgiven. The only thing that we are held accountable for now is the denying or accepting of Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. By accepting Jesus into our hearts, we are in covenant again with the God.

Now that we are back into covenant with God, does that mean that we no longer sin or that we no longer need to repent? Absolutely not!!! Now the cycle of relationship with God continues. God pours out more of his grace and more of His mercy every single day, every moment of the day. He shows me as I am growing as His child, the things I need to change.

There are times when His grace and mercy show to me the areas that are affecting my relationship with Him. Those areas are affecting the true peace (relationship) that I have with the Living God. When He shows me those things I then “repent” from those areas and get rid of them. When I do this I just want to love Him even more and my relationship with Him grows even more. This then allows Him to pour out more of His grace and mercy. And the cycle continues...

After all that God has done for us we must understand the role that true repentance has within the true believer’s life - as well as my own life. I do not live a life of constantly looking for the areas that I need to get rid of so that I can be saved. I am saved. But, let’s face it – we are not “all there” yet. I know that some in the Body of Christ these days are pushing the word “repent” right out of Christianity. They say we no longer need to repent. I respect their right to say that but I must whole heartedly disagree with that way of thinking and teaching. I believe the need for a heart of true repentance is vital to every believer.

The word “repent” is found 9 times in the Gospels and 14 times in the Book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament. The word “repentance” is found 10 times in the Gospels and 15 times in the Book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament. Do the math. Does it look like the aspect of “repentance” is not found in the New Testament? In all of these accounts found in the New Testament not one of them tell us that because of what Jesus did for us that we no longer need to repent.

I am not saying that we need to live our lives continually looking for the things we need to repent from. What I am saying is that we should not throw out the aspect of having a true repentant heart when we do mess up. I know that some of the staunch advocates of the stance that we no longer have the need to repent believe that they no longer sin and that they are perfect in the eyes of God. Hmm.....

Yes, we are looked upon as His children. Yes, God looks at His children with His love. Yet, as it states in Hebrews 12:5-8, *“...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: ⁶ for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. ⁷ If ye endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? ⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”*

Yes, whom the Lord loves He chastens. He chastens them so that they can repent and continue to love Him even more and more and more. Yes, our God does love us and those that truly love Him desire to grow more and more into being the child of God that He desires each one of us to be. There are times when He will show us where we go wrong. We simply just need to repent of that and then move on into even a greater relationship with our loving God.

You see, the word “repent” is not really a bad word to believers at all. It is a valuable for each of us and useful when we do mess up before our God. It is a very good word for all believers to know and to use as needed. It will aide in our relationship with the Living God as we live this life until we are forever with Him.