

In Spirit and in Truth: Rooted and Established

Freedom Church of Denton

Repentance

Volume 1, Lesson 3

- **In Devotion** (feel free to highlight, underline, and scribble notes. Take your time, working through the following material over the course of the next week...it would be better for you to get through one sentence with understanding than the whole lesson with no understanding!)

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized..."

So those who received his word were baptized...

Saving faith and repentance, the cause and the effect, are so logically and practically connected, as to appear to be almost the same work. Repentance is the *fruit* of the Holy Spirit's work in the heart of the believer as He convinces of sin and righteousness. We cannot understand righteousness and its source until we have first understood our own unrighteousness and inability. This is where repentance begins, in the awareness of our sin, becoming fully persuaded of the evil that we have committed against the law and nature of God. Our transgression then calls us to account to the righteous judgment of God and renders us lifeless at the altar of his mercy.

Notice in the example in Acts above, the vertical aspect of their repentance. The admission of these penitents was in direct response to their awareness that they had cooperated in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and had blood on their hands. Their "turning from sin" and "turning toward God and his mercy" was framed in their question to Peter, "what must we do?" Repentance was completed as they obeyed Peter's command in public identification with Christ and his work through the ordinance of baptism. This was no small commitment that came with no small risk.

Repentance is at the heart of genuine spirituality and is encompassed by the first and second of Jesus' Beatitudes that form his first and foundational teaching on the essence of the Christian life and Christ-centered discipleship (Mt. 5:3-4). He said, "blessed are the poor in spirit" and "blessed are those that mourn." These truths are at the heart of living a truly godly life; having a deep awareness of one's own need with an accompanying sense of sorrow and shame that leads first to humble confession, next to a hatred of sin, and finally to a turning from sin.

Repentance is one of the least taught and most neglected of the spiritual disciplines and yet it composed a notable measure of Christ's teaching. It is indispensable in living a fruit-

filled, power-filled, and productive Christian life, and is also an essential condition of effective prayer. Repentance could also be considered a hopeless and gloomy enterprise were it not for the mercy and promise connected to it. It is in the repenting that forgiveness and cleansing are found (1 Jn 1:9). It is in the turning from the chaos that the peaceful fruit of righteousness is appropriated (He. 12:11). It is in the seeking that the rain of his righteousness is received (Ho. 10:12)! Do not fear the pruning, child of God. Do not fear the indictments of men. God is the one who justifies! Nothing can separate you from his love, and no one can bring a charge against the redeemed of the Lord (Ro. 8:31-39)!

- **In Meditation**

As you consider the following references, first pray and invite the Holy Spirit to come and teach you as only the Teacher and Comforter can. Admit to him your complete inability to understand anything spiritual apart from his grace and illumination. Then consider each of these verses, taking notes on anything that the Spirit brings to your attention; perhaps a **S**in to confess, a **P**romise to claim, an **E**xample to follow, a **C**ommand to obey, or a **S**eed of righteousness to sow. If successful, you are learning to read the Word of God with your **S.P.E.C.S.** on!

Matthew 5:3-4 _____

What does it mean to be poor in spirit? _____

What is mourning and why are mourners blessed? _____

Why are these the first and foundational principles in Christ's teaching on the Beatitudes? _____

Cross reference **Revelation 3:17-18**. What was the Laodiceans' view of themselves? What was the truth of their condition? _____

According to this passage, Jesus equates the Laodiceans' "rich" view of themselves with not truly understanding their need. The opposite, therefore, is to understand the full depth of one's need. To see ourselves as God sees us. What was Christ's advice to the Laodiceans? What do you think the price was of the gold that Jesus was selling? _____

The Word of God is clear that Jesus came that we would enjoy abundant life. This among many other promises suggests that fruitfulness and prosperity of soul and spirit should be the normal experience of the believer. If this type of life is being hindered, there is more than likely an internal cause for the hindrance. We cannot say that circumstances prevent us or we would never attain. We cannot say that others have the power to prevent this life from flowing. And most assuredly, we cannot say that the enemy has the power to stop the power and promise of God. Therefore, the cause is often an internal one. What do the following verses counsel us with respect to maintaining the abundant inner life?

Hosea 10:12-13 _____

James 4:7-10 _____

1 John 1:9 _____

In Application

If our hearts are like soil or fields, then what would be the spiritual correspondence for each of the following items? Please describe the spiritual correspondence and then record personal confession for each item.

Fallow ground: _____

Weeds: _____

Rocks of various sizes: _____

Briars: _____

Foxes: _____

Sunshine: _____

Rain: _____

Nitrogen and other nutrients: _____

In Prayer

God, against Thee, and Thee alone have I sinned. Forgive me for what I have made of my life and how I have considered myself more highly than I ought. Forgive me for failing to see me as you see me, in all my nakedness and shame. Show me the price that I must pay to buy the gold that has been refined by fire. I suspect it may cost me my pride and dishonesty. I am sure that I also will have to pay in denominations of confession and surrender. Lord, I want to pay full price! I realize that the Angel of the Lord is standing in front of me with His sword drawn and that the haystacks I have been hiding behind are of no defense and offer only false comfort. Give me the courage and faith to repent fully. In Jesus name.

In Sharpening Your Axe

I have often said that what separates the men from the boys, and the women from the girls, is their ability to live the self-examined, honest, repentant, and confessed life. This can be summed up as consecration. This is not an event; it is a lifestyle. As in all the spiritual life, your fruitfulness will be directly proportionate to the seed that you have sown. The prosperity of your soul will correspond with your sincerity and diligence in cultivating the soil of your heart. Avail yourself of tools that are available to help you live the contemplative life. If you want new life you must break up the fallow ground.

Pull up the weeds. Cull the rocks. Put in the right nutrients. There is no other way!

On a practical note:

Although this is a lifestyle, you would be wise to also set up special occasions on an annual or quarterly basis for seasons of deep “house” cleaning. Most of us keep house daily, but set aside special times in which we can get behind the furniture and in the hard to reach places, the places that require extra time and extra elbow grease. Our souls are no different. Most heart-work can be managed daily, but some heart-work requires extended times of prayer and reflection. Don’t neglect this wonderful grace of God!