

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.
Series: The Benefits Of Salvation
Repentance unto Life
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Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a gracious work by which one is “born again.” Regeneration is a saving grace flowing from the “in Christ” relationship. Believers are “made alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5) and “are [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Ephesians 2:10). “Regeneration is the inception of being made holy...” (Murray, page 80)

John 3:3, 5, 6 – one must be born from above to see the kingdom of God and one must be born of water and of the Spirit before one can enter the Kingdom of God. Regeneration is prior to seeing or entering the Kingdom of God.

Now begins the divine-human activity which we call conversion. Effectual calling through regeneration is a divine act of God. **Regeneration precedes repentance unto life. One must be born again. God turns the heart to want to repent, to believe in Jesus Christ and receive Him.**

*In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. [or, to do his will] 2 Timothy 2:25, 26. KJV*

Repentance unto life is by the grace of God. It is a gift. It is part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is to be preached together with faith in Christ because repentance unto life and faith in Christ are like two sides of one coin. A person with a heart regenerated by the Holy Spirit turns from sin and from trusting in himself/herself to faith in Christ, trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. All other objects of hope for salvation are abandoned and Jesus is taken as the only hope of eternal life. This change and turn is a repentance unto life.

By this repentance unto life a sinner sees and senses not only the danger of sin, but also the filthiness and odiousness or heinousness of sin. This awareness is not merely intellectual, but highly personal. The person is convicted of his/her sin as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God. There is an awareness of the holiness of God contrasted with the sinfulness of a person’s personal sinful condition.

The person under conviction grieves for and hates his sins, is penitent, and desires to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with the Living God in all the ways of God’s commandments. The person knows of God’s mercy in Christ and seizes upon the apprehension of this mercy. The person is convinced of sin and his own corruption, convinced of God’s holiness, sovereignty, and his own inability to save himself from the path of destruction he is on.

One cannot rest in repentance as any satisfaction for sin or as any cause of the pardon of sin. Repentance does not cause God to pardon sin. Both the granting of

repentance and the forgiveness of sin are the act of God's free grace in Christ. Nevertheless, it is of such necessity to all sinners that no one, none, may expect pardon or forgiveness of sin without the granting of repentance unto life. It is "repent or perish." It is "repent and believe."

There is no sin so small, but that it deserves damnation. Likewise, there is no sin so great that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent. Where sin abounds, grace does more abound. If we offend in even one point of the Law, we are guilty of all. We are lawbreakers and covenant breakers, having offended an infinite and eternal and holy God who is blessed forever.

People ought not to be content with some general repentance, but should endeavor to repent of particular sins, particularly. The Holy Spirit gives us a heart that wants to be in fellowship with the Father because of the Cross Work of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit, quenches Him, puts up a resistance to Him, can make Him turn to be our enemy on that point, insults Him, limits Him, etc. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and of righteousness and judgment in order that we might be and remain in good fellowship with the Godhead. 1 John 1.

It is important to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives and to love truth at all costs so as to acknowledge the truth, accept the truth, align ourselves to the truth, and walk in truth. God's Word is truth. Jesus Christ is the truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. God's love is a love without a lie. God loves in truth. Therefore, as God grants repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, it is so that we might recover ourselves from the snare of the devil, who is holding us captive at his will (or to do his will). 2 Timothy 2.25, 26

One thing important to those who witness or preach is to realize that there is a tendency to proclaim faith in Jesus Christ as the sole necessary response to the gospel to the neglect of mentioning repentance unto life as equally necessary for the forgiveness of sins. While it is true that people need salvation *from* sin, and need to have faith in Jesus Christ, it is also true that there is no hope for pardon without God granting the repentance unto life.

Repentance alone does not save, as it has no intrinsic merit; yet one must repent in order to be saved. Likewise, just making some decision for Christ in order to demonstrate faith in Christ is no true faith at all.

The Scriptures give to us our biblical ground for insisting that repentance unto life must be proclaimed along with faith in Jesus Christ.

OT: Isaiah 55:7; Joel 2:12, 13; Ezekiel 33:11; Job 42:5, 6; Jeremiah 8:6. The verbs in the OT have to do with "turn," "return," and "repent."

NT: 34 times the word-group is *metanoew* (*meta no eh o*); 22 times it is *metanoia* (*metanoia*), meaning "to change one's mind" and "a change of mind" respectively. These are used in the NT primarily. Another word, *strejw* (*strephe*) and a derivative (*epistrepho*) means literally "to turn" and "to turn about" respectively (both are consistently translated "convert" or "be converted"). There is also *metamelomai* (*metamelomai*), meaning "to become concerned about afterwards," which also applies.

Jesus made it very clear that repentance is to be a part of the gospel presentation. On the evening of His resurrection from the dead He let it be known: **“This is what is written: that the Messiah should suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance for [metanoian eis] forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed [karuxthana] in His name to all nations.”** (Luke 24.46, 47)

As did John the Baptist before Him (Matt. 3:2, 8,11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3, 8; Acts 13:24; 19:4),

Jesus Himself:

1. preached repentance in the imperative mood (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15),
2. characterized the very purpose behind His coming to people in terms of calling sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32),
3. warned that unless people repented they would perish (Luke 13:3, 5) and
4. unless they were converted [*straphate*] and became as little children, they would never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:3),
5. denounced whole cities that would not repent while commending Nineveh for repenting at the preaching of Jonah (Matt 11:20, 21; 12:41; Luke 10:13; 11:32),
6. And declared that heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7, 10).

The apostles on their preaching missions throughout Galilee, **“preached that people should repent”** (Mark 6:12), and continued to be true to this aspect of their Lord’s commission throughout the Book of Acts:

Peter – Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22

Paul – Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20

Also, the writer of Hebrews indicates that “repentance from dead works” is a first principle of the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 6:1).

Note – repentance from dead works is repentance unto life

Repentance unto life is a gift procured by Christ and effected by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit which precedes it.

As the response to God’s sovereign and effectual summons which was procured by Christ’s cross work and made effectual by the Holy Spirit’s regenerating operations in the soul, repentance unto life is uniformly represented in Scripture as a gift of God.

Psalms 80:3, 7,19; Jeremiah 31:18; Lamentations 5:21; Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25

Repentance unto life is not a mere “worldly sorrow.” Acts 11:18 shows us that godly sorrow for sin is a sorrow that leads to true repentance. 2 Corinthians 7:10 talks about it as “repentance leaving no regrets and leading to salvation.” 2 Timothy 2:25 speaks of “repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.” It is to be distinguished from what Paul calls mere “worldly sorrow that produces death.” 2 Cor. 7:10

We see this worldly sorrow in the rich young ruler and in Judas. The rich young ruler, when he heard Jesus' requirements for discipleship, "became very sorrowful." **Luke 18:23**. But his was a "worldly sorrow" because, being "a man of great wealth," he regarded his wealth as of greater value than the privilege of following Jesus. He went away. Others, however, responded to the call of Jesus to follow Him, effectual calling.

When Judas saw that Jesus had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the 30 pieces of silver. (Matt 27:3). But this was a "worldly sorrow" because it did not lead to the "repentance leaving no regrets and leading to salvation." It drove him to suicide. Read what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7.

People may feel remorse over their sins for any number of reasons. They may fear hell. They may fear consequences of their actions. They may fear getting caught. But unless their sorrow for sin:

- 1) is their **response** to the sight and sense not only of the **danger** but
- 2) also of the **filthiness and heinousness of their sins**
- 3) as **contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God**,
- 4) which then **compels them to grieve over and hate their sin**
- 5) such that they **turn from them all to God with full purpose and endeavor to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments**,

it must be judged as mere "worldly sorrow that produces death." Godly sorrow is a response and gift of the Holy Spirit's regenerating work, a gift that produces "repentance leaving no regrets and leading unto salvation," a "repentance unto life."

Adapting from a summary by Dr. Robert L. Reymond,:

Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner out of a true sense of sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience. It entails a radical and conscious change of view (the intellect), change of feeling (the emotions), and change of purpose (the volition or will) with respect to God, ourselves, sin, and righteousness, helplessness before God. It involves the whole soul-mind, will, and emotions-turning from sin to God, not merely as an intellectual enterprise, but as touching the soul personally, deep down where one lives. We **acknowledge** that we are sinners and that our sin entails personal guilt, defilement, and helplessness before God. We **sorrow** with a "godly sorrow" for the sins we have committed against the one, true, holy and just God. We **resolve** by God's grace to seek pardon and cleansing at the cross through the blood of Christ which alone satisfies the offended justice of God. We thus turn from our sins, from self, from Satan, from being the enemy of God, from death, and from the world's system, to the Living God in a repentance that leads to life with our whole soul.

Thus salvation affects us: body, mind, soul, spirit, and life as the Holy Spirit convicts, convinces, converts, corrects, and changes us, granting repentance unto life in a lifelong process of our justification, sanctification, and ultimate glorification.

Repentance unto life is ongoing, just as is deliverance from evil/sin and faith in Christ. Starting at a point in the life of a believer, this process continues in the progressive sanctification of preparing us to be with Lord forever.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. Romans 8:1-11 ESV

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