

IS REPENTANCE ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION?

Biblical evidence is uniform. Repentance is absolutely essential to salvation in the presence of God. "Except ye repent, ye shall . . . perish" (Luke 13:3). "God . . . commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

It is, therefore, crucial to understand just what repentance is. Repentance is not the performance of good works since it is described as a gift in 2 Timothy 2:25. Translated from the Greek New Testament, repentance is literally a change of mind. Thus, repentance is actually internal, a change of heart. Paul described his missionary work as "Testifying . . . repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). A change of mind (repentance) toward God is a reorientation of one's thinking toward God, His nature, what He has said about man, sin, how to be forgiven, and what He expects by way of behavior after becoming a Christian. Repentance is accompanied by sorrow for rebellion against God (2 Corinthians 7:10). This results in a changed life, for as a person ". . . thinketh in his heart, so is he. . ." (Proverbs 23:7). While sinless perfection is not attainable in mortality (1 John 1:8), if a person has truly repented and been saved, his life will be characterized by obedience and resemble the Christians of Thessalonica who ". . . turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Repentance is an element of genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is not a second principle or ordinance of the gospel separate from faith. To exercise faith in the Savior of the Bible is to accept or receive Him as the only means of eternal life.

"As many as **received** Him [the Lord Jesus Christ], to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that **believe** on His name" (John 1:12). The Savior of the Bible is the LORD Jesus. Lordship is rulership. When He is received in this manner, repentance takes place. The mind and life are thereby changed to a proper relationship with God.

Yes, repentance is essential to salvation. The Lord ". . . is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). It is essential, for instance, to have a total change of mind concerning any supposed human ability to help earn eternal life. Eternity with God is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy. . ." (Titus 3:5). The message of the Bible is unmis-takable. ". . . Repent ye, and believe. . ." (Mark 1:15).

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