

Sin vs. Repentance

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The Bible indicates that we have numerous things in common. We all need companionship (Gen. 2:18). We were all created with the same drives. We all get hungry and thirsty so that we will eat to nourish and hydrate our bodies. We were created with a sexual drive to procreate (a drive that is valid within the proper confines – Heb. 13:4).

However, there is another thing we all have in common – we have sinned (Rom. 3:23). The result of that sin is man's separation from God (Isa. 59:1-2). The good news is that a cure for this sin has been provided, but only in God's redemptive plan. There are numerous aspects of and roles played in that plan, none more important than that of repentance.

Repentance is a prominent theme in the preaching of the gospel. Whether we are examining that which was expressed by Christ (Luke. 24:46-47), Peter (Acts 2:38-39), or Paul (Acts 17:30-31), repentance occupied an important role in the early preaching of the gospel.

This emphasis upon repentance is often neglected in the denominational dogma of our day.

Many in the religious world focus on the "faith only" theology born in the Reformation movement in the efforts of Martin Luther and John Calvin. Once, when my dad was studying with my aunt about baptism, she concluded the study by closing her Bible and saying, "Just turn your heart over to Jesus and everything will be all right."

The plethora of "how-to" books flooding the market today indicates that people are willing to learn to do things in which they have little or no experience or ability. One can learn how to do things ranging from how to improve your golf swing to building your own backyard storage building. There is apparently a great interest in learning to do better with that which is difficult. The Bible provides such information as it relates to the difficult task of repentance. It is difficult as is seen in the fact that we all struggle with it. There are times we do those things we should not or do not do the good things we should. We might even find ourselves continuing to struggle with the same issues, though we regret having done them. How can we turn from those things in our lives that separate us from God? Let us look at two things (among many) that will help us in this endeavor.

One of the first involves acknowledgement of our situation. As a defense mechanism, we are prone to rationalize our situations. Rather than looking at things as sin, we tend to belittle them, enabling us to better deal with them. We didn't sin; we just "slipped up." As stated earlier, to overcome sin we must realize that these are not just "indiscretions;" rather, they are actions and attitudes that will separate us from God. They are not "little things." The removal of them from man involved and required the death of Christ on the cross (John. 3:16; Matt. 26:28; Rom. 5:8). Acknowledging that we are sinners is the first step down the path that God has provided for us to deal with the sin in our lives.

Having acknowledged our sin is just the beginning. This can be illustrated by examining the situation of one who is sick. Realizing that we are sick because of the symptoms we have is one thing. However, that realization will not make us any better unless we seek that which will cure the illness. We have already seen that Christ and His blood are the remedy for sin. One may read that and believe it, but still not act upon it. To have one's sin removed requires repentance (turning from that which is wrong to that which is right) and baptism, the point in which one comes into contact with Christ's shed blood (Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 3:27). In other words, we must both acknowledge that we have sinned, and take the steps required to rectify the situation.

May we encourage people to be honest with themselves in such matters. The salvation of their souls depends upon handling such things correctly. God has provided the cure. May we tell others how they may be cured.