

## **REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE AND SALVATION**

I remember my 72-year old grandfather telling me he had become a Christian. He had genuine tears of joy, however, his joy was accompanied with one regret, - he had not become a Christian earlier in his life. A woman who I led to the Lord in Maybole told me a similar thing, - she wished she had become a Christian earlier.

These indeed are very fine thoughts, - and beautiful to hear, - however, the paragraph in our chapter of the *Baptist Confession of Faith* explains to us that sinner areis saved only when God calls them to be saved. Not a moment before, and not a moment afterwards.

It is therefore theological error to contend as the Jesuits taught, - and adapted by Arminianism, - that if we ‘catch’ the children in their early years they are more likely to become Christians. That is *not* the case, - children are as hard to the Gospel as any mature adult! Out of theological error and heresy comes the old falsehood that teaches a child has such a thing as ‘an age of innocence/discretion’ and that during those years (no-one is altogether sure what the years are) if the child dies without making a conscious personal decision for Christ the child is automatically fit and bound for Heaven. This old heresy has its foundations in Rome and is carried on into Arminianism, - it has no Biblical basis. You have probably heard of a place for the infant departed in Romanism known as Limbus Infantum, - the place reserved for infants who die; you will not find this place anywhere in Scripture.

Be under no illusions, - all (from the youngest to the very oldest) have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory and, - as sinners, - face the terrible wrath of God. Neither age, good looks, good works, wealth or poverty, being born in a Christian family … nothing makes the slightest difference to the basic truth that everyone born into this world is in need of the personal relationship with God through His Son in order to be saved from sin and made an heir of His kingdom. *Repentance* therefore is a matter fundamental to salvation.

## **REPENTANCE IS THE NECESSITY FOR SALVATION**

- \* What is there that I can do for myself in order to be saved? Rather than run off a whole lot of suggestions we all know there is not one thing we can do.

- \* There is not a thing we can do in order to save ourselves from sin and from Hell. Sin is too mighty. It is too powerful. It is like chains that bind the slave. There is no breaking free from sin, - we haven't the strength or the capability.
- \* Arminians say we have the power within ourselves to break away but they foolishly underestimate the domination of the shackles of sin and also, - by considering themselves capable of doing something for themselves to break free, - they are demeaning the work of Christ.
- \* No, a sinner sins because it is the natural thing for a sinner to do. It is *inbred* to reject God and what He claims to be able to do.
- \* It is simply part of our makeup that we can do nothing to save ourselves and we naturally object to God's grace.
- \* But God did not make us in order to fulfil some cruel passion He had so that at the end of our life He would call us in before the judgement throne and take some perverted pleasure in casting us into Hell.
- \* The loving and almighty God of all grace had already worked out His plan whereby He would save His people. However, He would not forgive their sins automatically; He would not overlook their evil and their fallen nature.
- \* Sin, - anywhere and in anyone, - must be dealt with to the satisfaction of our Holy Father ... and He sent His Son to die on the cross of Calvary as the Substitute for His people and their Atonement.
- \* In grace He brought about the terrible conviction of sin within the sinner. He *troubled* us about our sin ... and it became a burden that felt as if it was too heavy to bear.
- \* He made us to see the terribleness of our offence against Him. As a consequence we began not to take sin lightly but the awful horror of our sin hung over us like a cloud.
- \* God looked straight into our hearts and He convicted us in order to bring us to the place of repentance.
- \* Because of the meaning of this word 'repentance' there is no place for anyone to come to Christ '*lightly*' or frivolously to be saved. There is no other way to come to Christ to be saved other than through genuine and sincere repentance for the sin committed.
- \* Even the child must repent to be saved for even the child coming to Christ knows and has been brought to the place where they recognise their need of the Saviour. ... **Repentance is the necessity for salvation!**

## **REPENTANCE IS THE GIFT OF GOD FOR SALVATION**

- \* I was in a classroom on Tuesday morning of fifteen-year-old teenagers who, - without exception, - mocked at the notion of a loving God.
- \* I spoke to them about the goodness of God and the evilness of sin ... but they didn't want to listen. They laughed and they joked about the most serious issue anyone could ever be confronted with.
- \* They were as hard, - spiritually speaking, - as any rough adult I have ever spoken with.
- \* But, - you know, - even out of such hardness Christ can save. Many is the blasphemer and hater of Christ He has saved! He has countless times saved those who had been totally disinterested and dismissive.
- \* The harder the heart ... the greater the mercy and grace of God to save.
- \* There is absolutely no barrier any sinner can erect that God is not able to tear down.
- \* Of course, there are all types of barriers: Paul's barrier was his self-righteousness and his Jewish religion; Mary Magdalene's lifestyle was her prostitution and demonism; God can pull down any barriers He chooses.
- \* What does He do? He simply in grace makes an offer of salvation to the particular sinner that cannot be resisted.
- \* Oh yes, for a while the sinner runs and tries to hide from God's offer, - he/she doesn't want to be saved. ... But our God is not one Who gives up ... Who is willing to have His offers rejected!
- \* Upon whom He sets His mind to save ... He saves. The sinner may run ... John Newton's mother prayed for him as he ran and ended up in the slavetrade. She continued to pray and God caught up with John Newton and wonderfully saved him!
- \* God searches them out ... and He knows exactly where to find them ... and He enters into their circumstances and will not leave them until they cry out to Him to be saved.
- \* God never goes away disappointed, - He never fails to save those whom He has planned to save. To say otherwise is to elevate man and demean God's powerful work.
- \* He searches the sinner out, - even if they are getting old and seem to have rejected the teachings their Godly parents brought them up with.
- \* No matter how hard their hearts have become their sin is no match for God and they eventually crumble in repentance before Him.

- \* Ah, but you might say to me, the little children don't weep in repentance the way you describe. Fair enough, but they do have appropriate sorrow for the sin they have committed. Surely the reason the tears flow from the eyes of an adult coming to Christ is evidence of sorrow for the many years they have spurned His call.
- \* Many adults when they come to Christ come to Him with regret that they *wasted* all those years! I have had people say to me that if they had become a Christian earlier in their lives they would have gone and served Christ on the mission field ... but it saddened them that they had left it so late in their lives to come to Him.
- \* But the fact of the matter is that you come to Him when He effectually calls ... i.e. when the Holy Spirit brings you to the cross in repentance.
- \* I believe it to be one of the most beautiful truths that you and I can hold onto. Everyone of us here have loved ones who are heading towards a lost eternity. We have spoken to them often, but each time their hearts seem to be getting harder.
- \* But it is a most beautiful truth that God gives this saving grace to all types of people in every situation. They don't need to come to church to be saved; neither do they need to meet a pastor or evangelist.
- \* In the darkness of the night as they lie in bed ... or in whatever setting, God can bring before them something they have learned in Sunday School or on their parents' knee and God can convict in any place of His choosing and He can save them in spite of where they are and the type of life they have chosen.
- \* Repentance is as a consequence of the gift of God's wonderful grace.

### **REPENTANCE IS THE EVIDENCE FOR SALVATION**

- \* If there is no repentance for sin there is no salvation from sin. The gift God offers demands sorrow and repentance!
- \* If a person says they are saved but continues, - with a smile on their face, - on the road they formerly travelled ... neither baptism, church membership, the size of their Bible, their attendance at the meetings and the front they put up ... is sufficient evidence before God that they are saved.
- \* I was born a sinner and I sinned as a little boy, - I deserved Hell as a little boy. I didn't deserve for God to tap me on the head and make excuses for me, "Och, he's only a child! I'll forgive him." God can't do that!

- \* When I came to Him to be saved at a Faith Mission children's meeting on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1970 I needed to repent of my sin; I wouldn't have been the biggest sinner in the world but I still needed to repent for the sins I committed in my first eleven years.
- \* I have had to come back to Him again on many occasions in repentance for sins I have committed. Sadly, there's no other way for it, - as long as I am in this world it will rub off on me and stain. That's not an excuse for sin, that is simply fact.
- \* The *Confession* says, "It is every man's duty to repent of each particular sin of which he is conscious, and to do so with particular care".
- \* If someone says to you they are saved, but they have never turned from the path of sin ... on the basis of Scripture I can tell you they have never had a true experience of saving grace, because **old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new**.
- \* In order for the Holy Spirit to enter in He must first undertake the painful process and tear down and pull away those idols that once were held dear by the sinner.
- \* Repentance makes great demands, but for it to be real ... it is **the evidence for salvation**.
- \* J.C. Ryle wrote, "Let us beware of a repentance without evidence".

**Conclusion** Repentance is not too often mentioned nowadays. Society teaches us not to say sorry ... or at least, not in those words.

- \* To say sorry means you are weak and you have failed ... and we don't like to admit that! But ... you cannot be saved without repentance, it's impossible! God's Word plainly says, **Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out**.
- \* Without repentance there is no salvation, - it is as fundamental as that!
- \* Some people say, "I'll get saved later in life ... when the circumstances are right" ... and it's as if it's nothing more than washing your hands; but repenting is not washing your hands, it is the cleansing of the heart that only God can do.
- \* Sadly I believe A.W. Tozer got it right, "The teaching of forgiveness without any turning from sin is a great error and it has filled the churches with deceived members and helped to fill hell with deceived souls".
- \* Yes, this is how important it is to get this subject right! Surely it is the reason our *Confession* concludes the chapter, "This renders the constant preaching of repentance essential".